

2012 to 2015 Eckhart Tolle TV Part 6

[Speaker 1] (0:00 - 12:55)

India is called the Atman, that is the formless, and that's the very basis. If you go into, if you create before having consciously realized the source of creation, then you belong to all those billions of humans who create out of the state of identification with form, which we could call the ego state. But that's also the universe.

If the universe did not want to experience itself as the egoic entity also, then it would not be, the ego would not exist. So it seems the universe loves that dream, or which becomes a nightmare sooner or later of the egoic consciousness. So whenever you create, because you believe that the object of your creation is going to make you happy or fulfilled, then you create out of the egoic consciousness and it's stressful and frustrating and never really fulfilling.

But that's the dream of the ignorance of who you are. And perhaps the universe needs to dream that dream and then wake up out of that dream into a conscious realization of itself. And that also is happening through the human form.

So the humans can create out of the ignorance, identification with form, in which case also they create a lot of havoc. Of course, they create a lot of conflict because the more deeply you identified with form, the more you come into conflict with other forms that are also deeply identified with their form. That it's not just the individual form, it's also the collective forms of tribes, religions, religions within religions.

You see what's when you listen to the news, you can see one Islamic sect is killing another one and the boss, even within the same religion, they hate each other. And this has happened. And that is complete identification with form.

It's not, it's happened, it has happened in Christianity. In Christianity, at the moment, they may not be killing each other. They did not enough of that in the Middle Ages, but they still, many still hate each other.

And whoever does not agree with your little group, of course, is the antichrist. That's a nice word you can pre-impose on others. Buddhists haven't come up with that yet.

I have never heard of the anti-Buddha, Buddha. So, and that's within the totality, that's fine too, because that's the dream of identification with form. And how do I know that?

Because I've been in that dream and I've come out of that dream of identification with form. And what is true for the individual is true for the totality. So it's a collective dream.

It's also an awakening that happens when the suffering and the madness becomes so pronounced that it forces you to open your eyes. And then you look and say, what am I

doing? What are we doing?

What have I done? What have we done? So this happens when the suffering becomes very acute, as happened, for example, on a very large scale in the 20th century, when after the first world war, when for the first time, the tools of technology and science were used in warfare.

There had been warfare for thousands of years before. But now it became magnified through the tools of science and technology, bombs, gas, poison, the substances, artillery, tanks, submarines, machine guns. And suddenly they created havoc that they'd never seen before on such a huge scale, millions and millions of dead.

And nobody actually remembered how did it all start. What was the beginning of the first war? They just drifted into it totally blindly, identified with their little tribe, their little nation.

So that's one way of creating. And whenever you have not touched the source of life within yourself, touched it, realized it, live from it, then you create and add to the karmic burden on the planet because whatever you create has negativity attached to it and karma creates further resistance. It provokes resistance, creates more resistance, and though contributes to the continuation of the dream.

So to put it very simply, when you think something is going to make you happy, if you create this or that, that's not going to happen. That's the ignorance. If you're looking for fulfillment through something that you imagine you're going to create, it's not going to fulfill you, it can't.

You have to come from that state of fulfillment already. Then a different kind of creation can happen. You could, of course, just sit for the rest of your life somewhere and hope that somebody will put some food into your mouth as if you go to India and you're truly emanate peace, then that will happen.

They will put food into your mouth. If you do it in a Western country, it probably won't happen, but they'll put you away. And then they'll put food in your mouth.

That's okay. Most people find that even if they rest in presence, at some point, the impulse to act will be there. It could be action on a small scale, very small scale.

It could be action on a larger scale. It may not immediately be action. It may be an inspiration or an idea or a vision that suddenly rises into your mind.

And then you contemplate that and it feels empowered. And it is not something that says you need to achieve that in order to become happy or fulfilled. The energy that goes with it is so empowering that it is the same as if you had already achieved it.

That's the act of creation has that energy that flows with it. It is as powerful as the actual achievement in itself, if not more so, because the actual achievement is already the end of the creative process. The moment you have completed the creative act, you're already at the end of it.

And what now? So the empowerment is in the doing, not the arriving. That's the egoic delusion is that the empowerment is in the arriving, but the empowerment is in the doing, in the act of creation.

It's not just the empowerment, it's also the joy and aliveness that comes with it. So you don't need the, as it's called in the Bhagavad Gita, the fruit of the action. You're not looking or are more focused on the fruit of the action that it's called in the Bhagavad Gita, which means the outcome, the desired outcome.

You're not, your attention is not mainly in the desired outcome. Your attention is on the doing itself. Although, yes, you have a vision of what it is that wants to come into being, but your attention is fully in the doing and the enjoyment and the empowerment of doing.

It can be very intense, the act of creation. The energy that flows into it can be very intense. It's so intense that it might even look to an outsider as if you were stressed, but you're not.

But there can be that intensity of creation. So when something comes through or you, in whatever form, and that's beautiful, then you are the universe, the creative, the one intelligence, the one creative intelligence is creating through the human form, and that's beautiful. So it's this deep enjoyment in the act of creation.

It's the, the motivation is not egoic anymore. The motivation is not a sense of lack or fulfillment or of unfulfillment, but enjoyment. So in that sense, this, the secret, I don't remember if the secret talks about that, the book, that the foundation is the present moment as oneness with that, and then creation is fine when you no longer believe that certain things that you add to your life or create are going to make you happy or fulfilled.

So that's the difference. So the question then, do I need to make plans? I can't answer that as such.

You may be one of the few who will rest in being for the rest of their lives in this bodily form and just sit somewhere or walk around. And that's fine too, but it's less likely. There are very few.

It happens, maybe in India happens more than in the West, just as well, because the environment there is more receptive to that kind of thing. As for example, Ramana Maharshi, the, some of you may know, have heard the famous blue, wonderful spiritual teacher who passed away in the early 50s. He just sat, when he was a young boy, he left

his home.

He had a realization of being, of awakening. And he sat next to a temple away from his hometown. He left his family.

Nobody knew where he was. And he just, there was no movement into action, just being, no speaking, didn't want to eat, just the bliss of total oneness with the source. But after a few years, he started to put food in his mouth and then he started to speak.

So a little bit of doing happened even to him, but no planning. So in his case, he didn't say, okay, I'm going to set up an ashram. That happened by itself.

The ashram organically grew. So it can happen to some people who are just either totally present and then something happens around you. In most cases, some kind of doing will be involved.

It could be a spontaneous unfolding of what is happening already. Let's say you're playing an instrument and you love it so much that you just, you enjoy playing it. And then gradually music comes to you.

You compose something or spontaneously play. And suddenly, without any vision of what you want to achieve, things can grow. This can happen.

It has happened to people. Just the intense enjoyment of the doing leading to organic growth into form. The Beatles loved making their music and I don't think they had necessarily a vision that we are going to be the greatest ever, but it happened out of the deep enjoyment and the intensity of that act of creation.

[Speaker 4] (12:56 - 12:56)

Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (13:21 - 1:41:27)

A couple of weeks ago, I spoke briefly at a conference in San Francisco. A big conference, close to 10,000 people. Annual conference, mostly for business people, but always towards the very end, they have a spiritual person.

Which is better than no spiritual person. And then the organizer invited a small group of people who spoke at the conference and some who attended the conference to his home for dinner. Small group, meaning 150.

And he organized even some entertainment. The main person providing the entertainment is a kind of yogi magician. Nobody knows exactly whether he's more of a yogi or more of a magician, or whether it's a combination, or whether everything is just tricks.

Anyway, this person, the main entertainment of the evening, when people had eaten in the garden, they had erected a tent, a big tent, enough for 150 people. In the middle of the area, there was a raised pedestal and on it was a gigantic water tank, glass, transparent, with a few fishes swimming in it. And then it was announced that this man would now come and get into this tank and hold his breath for seven minutes.

And that's what happened. He came, still wearing a few clothes, and he climbed up, submerged himself in the tank. And of course, everybody could see him.

He was floating in there and there was a countdown and for seven minutes, and while he was in there, he looked at everybody from inside the tank, like a fish would look at you, but completely kind of still. And he managed to hold his breath for seven minutes and then finally he came out. And then after he had recovered from that ordeal, the organizer wanted me to meet him.

So there were a few people standing around and he was there. And one of the people standing around said, can you do that, he asked me. And I said, I don't think I can, but I can stop thinking for seven minutes.

And the man who had been in the tank said, it's very much like that. He meant, I suppose, being in the tank. And he probably meant when he's in the tank, he's not thinking because if he were thinking, he wouldn't last for seven minutes.

Presuming that it's not a trick, we don't know, but it didn't seem to be a trick. He was just in there holding his breath. So I mentioned this story because I want to emphasize again this afternoon, the main point of why we're here.

And that is to fully realize that there are two dimensions, so to speak, to who you are. The one that is defined in form, which includes the physical form and the psychological form and the thinking entity. So your consciousness has the two dimensions.

There's an intermediate area, but we don't need to go there. There's the conscious dimension of thinking and that creates your conventional sense of identity. And there is the deeper space where there is a vast consciousness that is not defined in form.

So there's the two of you, the known, the person, and the unknown, the undefined, or as the Buddha called it, the unmanifested, the unborn, the uncreated. And the Buddha added, this is one of the sutras in my free translation. So he said, there is the unborn, the unmanifested, the uncreated.

If there were not, sorry, the sutras are a little bit repetitive. If there were not the unborn, the unmanifested, the uncreated, there would be no escape from the born, the manifested, and the created. And I'm adding in my free translation and you would be completely stuck in it and with it.

So there is a dimension in every human that is far deeper than what you conventionally consider is the I. So you can say there is the I that is just defined through thought, and there is a deeper I that is not defined. And the purpose of your existence really is in evolutionary terms, is to find that deeper being, the undefined, the unknown, and bring that into this dimension and into your life.

And you all have made the discovery already that you don't need to think continuously, and that your deeper sense of who you are does not depend on what your mind is saying about who you are. There is a more immediate, much more real sense of I than you could ever find through thinking about who you are. So to access the unmanifested, the unborn, the uncreated, if you want to use those words, you have to find within yourself the space of no thought, which is always there.

It's just covered up by continuous thought. Doesn't have to be. So gradually, you find that the unknown you comes through more and more.

First, you have to become comfortable. I mentioned it briefly the other day. First, you need to become comfortable when you enter that space with not knowing anything, because that is the, you're accessing the unknown, the undefined, which is primordial intelligence itself, not intelligence that has become thought.

That's the only thing you can measure to a limited degree, but there's primordial intelligence. In order to access that, you have to give up, not completely because it's still there, but your reliance, exclusive reliance, and main reliance on accumulated knowledge and on thinking. If you don't give up your reliance on conditioned knowledge and thinking, you can never go beyond.

So you would be very limited, not be creative, and ultimately, not wise. You can have a highly developed mind, but lacking in wisdom. And to have a highly developed mind and lacking in wisdom as an underlying guiding force, and that comes from the deeper level, to have that highly developed mind, whether it's a person or a society, culture, is a dangerous thing, because that mind can create havoc for yourself and others.

And the more developed it is, the more destructive it potentially is also. So you find that often with people who, some people who run countries, of course they have a university degree, and they, well, not all, but some might be considered intelligent in conventional terms. And yet very often their actions are actually very unintelligent.

They don't take into account the totality of the situation, the deeper implications of their actions. So they're not, whatever they say or do is not connected to the realm of wisdom. Don't need to mention any names, but look at any politician that comes to mind, look at the past 20 years.

Some may come to mind. Such lack of wisdom, quite amazing. And then you have the

highly developed industry that creates dreadful weapons of destruction.

And these people who make these, they're all intelligent. Otherwise they wouldn't be able to do that. But how can you build an atom bomb without intelligence?

It requires highly intelligent people. So wisdom, intelligence needs to be guided by something deeper. And that deeper then needs to, can actually use the mind, the human mind, as an instrument for its expression.

And so, again, in order to get to that place, which is not a place, it's just a deeper dimension to who you are, you need to give up that reliance, that unconscious belief that you continuously need to think, to work things out, because otherwise things will get out of control. So every moment you need to have some kind of, comes to some kind of conclusion about this, what's happening at this moment. You immediately have some kind of opinion and conclusion and call it something.

And often at school, that quick, the quick, like a very quick comeback is often encouraged. The people who are, when the teacher asks questions, the one who can give the quickest answer is usually considered the best. And then there are others who may be slower and they don't even have time to raise their hand because it hasn't sunk in yet.

The question hasn't, the question needs to sink in and then at some point an answer may come, but they don't wait for them. There was, for example, when Einstein was four years old, his parents became concerned because their serious concern was that he might be mentally retarded because he was so slow at thinking. So we need to have that courage to go into that unknown place.

And what is that unknown place? Which is not a place. It's not to impose immediately interpretations on the world and on situations and on people and whatever arises.

So to be able to just look at things, look not just visually, but look in, also used metaphorically, which means to give attention to whatever is here now and to feel the power of your attention itself, which is intelligence, like a light that shines on a situation or on a person. And to feel that inherent power of consciousness that falls, is not, doesn't, is not produced by you. It comes through you.

Then you feel enormous amount of so-called self-confidence, not egoic self-confidence, but you are connected with, you can feel there's a power at the depth of who you are. And that power can flow into this moment. And it is there when you give your fullest attention to something and you're not thinking about it.

You're just looking, you're just giving attention. It could be a situation, a person you're looking at, whatever it is. You're just there as a field of attention, of awareness.

And so you are the bringer of awareness. And that flows from a deep place that is far transcends who you are as this physical form. That deep place connects you, not only with others or other humans, it also connects you with a source of all life.

And so you are not disconnected. You just seem to be. And the ego is a disconnected sense of self.

You are not disconnected from the totality of the universe. You are an aspect of the totality of the universe. You're not autonomous.

That's the delusion that every person is considered to be an independent consciousness, whereas the truth is every person is an expression of the one consciousness. So when you can feel that one consciousness as presence within yourself, you don't go around in continuous anxiety anymore. What's the next thing that's going to upset me?

And of course it always comes. So in other words, a certain confidence comes in that is not based on anything that you have perhaps achieved on the level of form. It's not confidence because you have an important position.

It's not confidence because you have accumulated wealth, not confidence because other people think you're great or not confidence because you have a certain ability that you have developed that you're better at than most people. Usually those things, or you look better than most people, or at least above average, either good looks or you have a great body. So all those things could give you your sense of confidence.

So a person who is very good looking would gain most, unless there are other factors, where that person is even more remarkable, but in the absence of other factors, the good looking person would predominantly gain self-confidence from looking in the mirror and seeing other people's reactions to who they are, which could be admiration and envy, depending on who is looking at you. And the ego would quite love that. It loves admiration and envy.

And so it feels, you feel confident because you're so good looking. And that lasts for, could last for a few years. And then it gets shaky because good looks don't last indefinitely.

And that's just one example. But whatever it is, it could be wealth. It could be what other people think of you.

So you derive confidence from some source, but that's always very shaky. And you may lose it when in certain situations, for example, the person who is confident because of their good looks might suddenly no longer be confident, surrounded by people who are intellectuals or have a lot of knowledge. And suddenly that person feels so stupid.

And so confidence collapses. So, and we often have examples of people who seem to

have everything. They should have a lot of confidence.

They've got, they were born into wealth. They look relatively good. They've had a good education, conventional terms.

And yet even that for many people they still feel, I'm not really good enough. And they can't quite explain why. So for some people, those external things work.

And for many others, even those don't work. So the real self-confidence is only there when you transcend the self. So we can then drop the word self and then you have true confidence.

And confidence means trust. And trust means absence of fear or anxiety, or a sense of not good enough, or a continuous compulsion to compare yourself to others, which makes life very uncomfortable. You always look around at others.

So the true confidence is not really self-confidence. The self, because there is the self, which is, that's one name we can have for ego. The moment you're not thinking, but you are just a presence, where is the self?

Where is the ego? It's gone. It's only when you start thinking again about yourself and your problems, then there's the self.

Well, not always problems, but often. But when you start thinking about yourself and your life situation, and so all the things you're dealing with, there's the self. And what you have and what you don't have, and what you can do and what you cannot do, and what you are aspiring to, and what you are proud of, and what you regret, and what you feel guilty about, and all those things that make up the egoic self, that can be transcended in an instant if you stop thinking.

And then suddenly there's only that presence. And then you're connected with the deeper. And then, at first, it comes in glimpses.

And then you are connected to the source of intelligence, and power, and aliveness. And then you suddenly feel very confident. And we can't quite say why, because if a person asks you, why are you confident?

You're not particularly good at anything. You don't look particularly great. You have no wealth.

You haven't got that much of an education. And why are you feeling so confident? And you would say, I don't know.

Ultimately, confidence means absence of fear. And the spiritual word for confidence in spiritual terminology would be faith. That is the real meaning of faith.

Faith is not to have a belief in a particular story. That's often people think faith is the same as belief. So if you believe in this particular story, even the story that there is a God somewhere who protects you, it's still a story.

And you might have faith in the story that there is a God somewhere who looks after you. It's fine. It's probably a bit more comfortable to have that than to have the belief that there is no God who looks after you in the absence of anything else.

Slightly better to have the belief there's a God who looks after you, but that's going to be very shaky when something bad happens to you. Because you had a deal. You had a deal with God and you had all that faith.

And what has he done for you? He was supposed to look after you. Was he asleep when that bad thing happened?

So it often happens that people who say they have faith, they go to church, but when something really bad happens, it gets very shaky suddenly. Sometimes they lose their faith. Sometimes they take refuge again and find some explanation.

They say, well, the traditional explanation is, well, he's punishing me for my sins. So that's it. And then the story works again.

So you have repaired the story. But so that is what is conventionally called faith. But true faith is the absence of fear and is not derived from a story.

It is derived from a deeper place within yourself. And that's what, if Jesus uses faith, this is what he talks about. Not believe in a particular.

Later, the people who wrote down what he taught, they already had misunderstood to a large extent. So distortions already started there. And then they had to translate from the language that he spoke in into other languages and another language, oh, it's a long story.

So faith is trust. Trust is absence of fear. And that can only be there by accessing that deeper dimension within yourself.

And the quickest way there is suspend thinking and feel yourself as the presence. And you will then find that gradually presence increases in your life. It comes through more.

And gradually it begins to replace your ordinary conventional sense of identity, which is still has the remnants of it are still there, of course. For example, I can think about my childhood. I can think about my twenties and thirties and what happened then, what I was doing then.

And so in that sense, I can even meet people that I knew a long time ago and just re-recognize each other although we look different after many years, meet people again. So

in that sense, of course, that still is that kind of continuity that is upheld by thought. And so you remember all those things.

And, but who you are, your sense of beingness, of identity, of who you are is not derived from that anymore. Nor is it derived from your current life situation, whether you are rich or poor or influential, don't know what that means, or non-influential. If you look at the hundred, once a year, they choose the hundred most influential people on the planet.

And with some of them, you can understand, okay, that makes sense. But with others, you say, what? One person can shake their body in a particular way.

It becomes the one most, one to a hundred most, well, it's interesting choice. And many other examples. Don't want to mention any names.

So all that influence, all that stuff, all those things no longer matter. So I found, for example, luckily my old sense of identity kind of dissolved. And then there was that confidence, but in the eyes of the world, that confidence was misplaced.

It was, nobody understood it. And most people didn't even notice it because I don't necessarily appear very confident in ordinary human interactions. I'm kind of, don't say that much.

And some people call me shy. So, but I knew I had this feeling of rootedness in being, but everybody else thought I, my life was ruined because I had abandoned my academic career and had nothing else to replace it with. So how, why do you feel okay with yourself?

You've, you have nothing. You've, you've thrown it all away. So my mom didn't understand me at all.

She only understood me again after I'd become successful. So there was, there was that quiet confidence in the background that wasn't based on anything external. I could have thought back, well, I was, I did get into Cambridge, so I must be great, but then I dropped out, so that's not good.

So I could have constructed some kind of story in my mind, I got into Cambridge, but I was too good for them, so that's why I dropped out. There could have been a story that temporarily would have been satisfying, but not for long. And some stories are quite absurd.

People actually, many people actually have fictitious stories about who they are based on events that never happened, but let's not go there. So my sense of identity then as the unsuccessful person, and then the so-called successful person didn't change, just exactly the same feeling of beingness, of I-ness. There was no change between being nobody in particular and being somebody special in the eyes of the world, but there was

no change in the feeling of identity, unfortunately, because my ego would have, the big ego I had in my twenties would have loved that success, would have gone, yay, I made it, but it was too late.

So accessing the, that not knowing, state through presence, become comfortable with not knowing so that you don't compulsively interpret everything all the time. Then you access greater intelligence. And then at first, gradually, you notice it flows into, you might find yourself saying things that surprise you in certain situations, only when the situation requires it.

You don't just say it into nothingness. When the situation requires it, you find yourself saying something. Oh, what did I just say?

That's interesting. Or you take certain action or certain insights come to you. You're kind of carried or kind of guided, but not in a narrow sense.

Intuition arises more, more creative thoughts, because thoughts still come. But as you become comfortable with not knowing, the thoughts tend to be less destructive. And that element of destructiveness goes eventually out completely.

So thoughts don't torture you anymore. Your own, because millions on this planet are being tortured on a daily basis, not by anybody, but by their thoughts. An enormous amount of suffering is created on a daily basis by millions of people on the planet.

They create it for themselves. They don't know it. It's amazing state.

That's why we call it unconscious. So that doesn't happen anymore. So thoughts still operate.

Even some drifting thoughts still occasionally happen, but they are harmless. They're no longer poisonous vipers that bite you. They're thought, oh, oh.

And then another thought, oh no, what am I going to do? And then if that wasn't enough, more thoughts come. And so much fear is generated by thought, not by situations, but by thoughts.

So that's, you need to, as soon as possible, get out of that. Another wonderful shift that happens is the usual state is you're always confronted with situations and people, and they change all the time. And that makes up your external life, a continuous change of people that come in, situations change, places change, and things happen.

And mostly those who are unconsciously identified with the egoic self are, so to speak, underneath the situations, which means the situations determine their inner state, their state of happiness or unhappiness or well-being, their state of mind, their emotional state. So the simplest example, just to simplify, just to show you what I mean, it rains

one day and they go, oh, what a miserable day. Next day, it's sunny.

Oh, it's sunny. That means you are under the situation. You're not above the situation, you're under it.

The situation controls you. And I've given them the simplest possible example, but even that happens very commonly. So, especially if you live in London or Seattle or Vancouver, where it rains quite a lot, then if you are dependent to some extent, even on the weather for feeling good or not good, then that's what happens.

But you will notice when you look out of the window, the real pain comes with saying, what a miserable day. It's, the rain is nothing in itself. It just is.

But you call it something. And it's not just a middle, it's another miserable day. And the moment you have used the word, the thought miserable, it connects to other things in your life that you can also call miserable.

And there we go, that's the beginning of a day. And that's the beginning of a storyline in your head. And you are under the situation.

So whatever situation you go into, and now of course there are many more complex situations in your life than the weather, you meet a person. Now, how does this person behave towards you? How that person behaves towards you, of course depends on the state of consciousness of that person.

Now, and then how do you behave to that person after you've had their reaction towards you? What is your reaction towards them? And usually if you're under the situation, your actions and words and how you feel are determined by the other person's actions and words.

In other words, an angry person will make you angry too. Or other states, a confrontational person, when you're discussing a certain subject, whatever state of consciousness that person manifests, you will follow if you're under the situation. Or things, of course, continuously, not continuously, but frequently in one's life, things in quotation marks go wrong because you've made plans to do something and something comes to interfere with your plans.

Things are going wrong. The usual thing, if you're under the situation, you get upset, you get miserable. You complain to yourself and others.

That's dreadful. Now, considering the fact that these things happen quite frequently in everybody's life, that is not a powerful way to live. If you are at the mercy of situations, you're at the mercy of things going exactly the way you planned them and the way they are supposed to go.

And if they don't, you get upset. Some people get sad or depressed, others get angry and irritated, whatever it is. So you are at the mercy of things happening or not happening or happening in a particular way, or people behaving towards you in a particular way.

So you're under, you're always at the mercy of stuff happening or not happening. And if you are more deeply connected with the presence, that is the source of satisfaction in your life. Every other source of satisfaction is kind of fake, pseudo, not the real thing.

Presence, that arising presence is the source of satisfaction, the primary source of satisfaction in your life. Yes, there are secondary sources of satisfaction. Of course, an apple pie.

You have a nice swim, feels good. You go for a hike. You have sex.

You have a drink. You even achieve something. You learn to master a certain skill.

And then as you practice, it's satisfying. And then you achieve it, it's satisfying. These are all secondary satisfactions in your life.

And there's nothing wrong with that, of course. And if you meet a long lost friend, suddenly, oh, it's great to meet you. It's so wonderful.

Of course, there is a satisfaction in that, but they are all secondary satisfactions. The main source of satisfaction is the presence. And even all those things that are secondary satisfaction, many of them are because for a moment, they bring you into presence.

For example, if you're climbing a mountain or you're hiking or you're walking on the beach or you're swimming, certain activities take you out of your mind and can bring you into presence while they last. And you feel so good. And you think it's caused by the activity, but it's caused by the fact that all the habitual torturous thinking subsided and you're suddenly completely there.

That was so good, that swim, that hike, that whatever it was, it was so good. Okay, why? Well, it was good because, were you thinking?

No. Were you thinking about yesterday or tomorrow or your problems or your difficult life or difficult people in your life? No.

Okay, you were completely present. So once you realize and sense that true satisfaction is derived from presence, that means when things go wrong in ordinary life, when you encounter undesirable, so-called undesirable circumstances, when things don't work out they were supposed to work out, things break, suddenly you lose something, a difficult person comes into your life. You can, even in that situation, you can continue to be in touch with the source of satisfaction.

Let's say you made great plans for some great wedding and suddenly on the wedding day, something happens and the groom or the bride are detained somewhere and they can't make it. And we've invited 300 people and we've paid thousands of dollars for this wedding and I've been looking forward to this for years. It was supposed to be the culmination of my life.

It's a fictitious situation, but it could happen and probably has happened. It's just one of many possible examples. So this is a very unpleasant thing if you're not in touch with a true source of satisfaction and you go all shaky and upset or hysterical, whatever, depending on your predispositions.

If you lock yourself in a room or you scream, depending on whatever kind of ego you have. But if you are in touch with the source of satisfaction, in presence, well, okay, that's a pity. But of course we'll have it some other day.

And you continue to feel a sense of aliveness because after all, this moment isn't that bad just because the wedding has collapsed and I'm using the collapsed wedding as a metaphor of whatever collapses or goes wrong. So here we have, and you are then above the situations in your life. They don't control you anymore.

And I wouldn't go so far as to say that you control them. To some extent, of course, you can manifest certain good things, but you're never totally in control of externals. There are many other factors.

So, and you don't need to be totally in control of externals. So question always arises, are you above the situation or are you below the situation? Are you at the mercy of situations and people or are you free of dependency on how other people behave towards you or how certain situations evolve or happen or dependent on whether something happens or does not happen?

Shortly after my, this shift in consciousness, I had saved some money to visit my dad in Spain. And because his wife was extremely challenging, it was agreed that I would stay in a small hotel. That was, I was in my, I think I was about 30 years old.

So I was looking forward, of course, to going to, I lived in England, going to a sunny Southern Spain, spending 10 days there. And I booked, or my dad booked for me a place. He didn't have any money at that time.

Well, he had some money, but not, I think not enough to book a great room for me. So he made a booking, but he hadn't looked at the hotel or the room. And when I arrived, the hotel was by the sea.

So I imagined a view of the beautiful blue Mediterranean Sea. And when I got there and I looked out the window, there was a brick wall. It was facing away from the sea, and there was a kind of cliff, and there was just a brick wall and a little bit of sky.

And so I stood there and looked at the brick wall, and suddenly I felt incredibly peaceful. And I suddenly realized it doesn't matter at all whether I have a sea view or a brick wall. Why didn't it matter?

Because there was a flow of satisfaction coming from within. If it had been my choice, I would have said, I prefer a sea view to a wall view. But I didn't have a choice.

And I was amazed because that was not long after this inner shift. So I wasn't yet familiar with all the effects it has on things in one's life. And there were many, many instances when I was amazed.

I said, why do I feel so peaceful? I don't know, I just feel, I did nothing. In this particular case, I knew that at some level, it did not, ultimately did not matter.

And that was so liberating. So liberating. That reminds me of a very similar story.

We had a retreat in probably Oregon many years ago. And one of the participants who was also a friend of ours had just started to unpack things in her room, the retreat room, when a woman burst into her room without knocking, in tears and sounding hysterical. And she said, this was supposed to be my room.

And they put me somewhere else. I asked specifically for this room. I've been waiting for this retreat for a long, long time.

And I'm having difficulties in my life. And he says, oh, just don't try to. And our friend, without even having, giving it a single thought, said, you can have it.

I'll move into yours. And the woman's, really? No, do you mean that?

Oh my God, how wonderful, thank you so much. I'm so happy. It is probably true that she had been through difficult times, yes.

But she was totally at the mercy of externals. And our friend, I didn't inquire further how she felt when she moved into that undesirable room, which probably wasn't that bad. I don't think there was a brick wall outside the window.

She was fine. So in her, there was some connectedness with the source of satisfaction. So her wellbeing did not depend on what kind of room she was in.

Now, does that mean whatever room they put you in, when you book a room in a hotel, you should say, okay, not necessarily. Why not, if that is not the right room, you can talk to the, actually, this isn't the room I booked. I'd rather have the room that I booked and paid for, and then see what happens.

But again, there is not going to be that, ah, ah, or the anger. This is, how dare you put me in this room? You lose all, there's no longer a flow of, do you remember we talked

about what makes up a true human?

It's goodwill towards other humans, a flow of benevolence and goodwill, no matter what the situation is. And even if you're complaining about your room, you can complain, and there can still be a flow of benevolence and goodwill because there is a human being there. That human being may have nothing to do with the fact that they put you in the wrong room.

And you probably know that, but you're angry with him or her. So, of course you can change situations. And I think I probably asked, I don't remember all the details, I may have asked, I'm sure I did in that, when I got to that hotel with a brick wall outside, do you have another room with a sea view?

Sorry, that's all we have left. Okay. So it was a surprise to me that, one that I could be okay with that.

And I don't know how this woman from the retreat, whether she benefited from the retreat and whether by now, I haven't seen her in a long time, I wish her well, and I do hope that by now, she has found the source of true satisfaction within herself so that the wrong room does not create an enormous amount of suffering. If a wrong room creates an enormous amount of suffering, how much suffering when something really goes wrong? So connect to the source of satisfaction, otherwise you're at the mercy of stuff and people.

How do you connect? Access the space of aware presence and stop thinking for a moment. Stopping thinking is not an action that you do as if you were attacked your mind and told your mind, stop thinking.

It is possible to stop thinking if you hold your breath for long enough. But eventually, even if you hold it for seven minutes, eventually you have to breathe again and then we'd have to think again. So it's not, you cannot force that presence onto yourself.

And stopping thinking is not an action you take against thinking. It is rather a letting go of thinking. One could say a dropping, you relinquish, you realize that right now you don't want it, you don't need it.

It's superfluous to the situation. So you just, it's more a letting go than an active interference of what's happening in your mind. It's a surrender.

This is why it is often associated with surrendering to what is because surrendering to what is is not attacking what is or fighting with or through some kind of internal struggle, bring about surrender, that doesn't work. You cannot bring about surrender through some extra internal struggle. I must surrender.

But there's something in me that doesn't want to surrender. Surrender is just a, this is

what is. So this moment brings you into presence and into yourself.

And so I would suggest even so that presence, give it a chance so that presence can arise more and more in you and use situations. I already pointed out a few, and there's some in the books where you invite the state of not thinking into your life. I talked about the waiting.

You remember whenever you're waiting for something, be alert, be present, be completely there and drop all the nonsense in your mind that says this shouldn't be happening. Be completely there with your attention. Feel your attention, feel the attention.

And then you look around and there is nothing wrong with this situation where you are waiting unless the mind tells you there is something wrong. But there's nothing wrong with the situation. That's an amazing realization.

Associated with that is you will be able to differentiate between a situation and your reaction to the situation. Unconscious people cannot distinguish something that happens and the way they react to what happens. They are a single thing.

So again, to bring it down to the simplest example, unconscious people cannot tell the difference between when they look out of the window in the morning and it's raining and their mind says what a miserable day. They actually believe that it is a miserable day. They can't distinguish between the situation and their mental, emotional interpretation of the situation.

They become a single phenomenon. That's a mark of unconsciousness. So if you can tell apart, perhaps even in the moment of calling something, something, you look out of the window and suddenly you realize, well, there's water coming down from the sky and it's raining.

And here's my reaction to it. Here's the story in my mind that says it's a miserable day. Suddenly you've separated the two.

Once you've separated the two, you realize you end up with this baggage in your hand of that which your mind added to the situation. Do you still want that miserable thing or you just drop it? And suddenly you look out of the window and it is as it is.

And that's freedom. So I've just gave a very simple example, can be applied to any situation. So there's always just the isness of this moment which cannot ever be otherwise.

Of course, you can take a step to change what is now, but right now it is. The mind, the egoic mind does not know the basic fact that what is right now already is and cannot be otherwise because it already is. This is perhaps the most basic truth you could utter, but

the egoic mind doesn't know that.

It says, oh no, it is, but it shouldn't be. And, or this is another person, let's say it's a person. The isness comes to you in the form of a person.

So this is how this person, this is what this person says and does. And this is the emotional energy or mental energy that you can feel coming from that person. That's what it is.

Should it be otherwise? Your mind could say that, but if you become completely okay with that's what is, then immediately you are in touch with a deeper, because you are not, no longer ego-based. So you can, even if, even just that acceptance will drop you into presence and suddenly you can feel, even if you had lost it for a moment, suddenly you can feel it again by simply accepting this moment as it is.

And suddenly you feel, oh, there's a presence. Feel yourself as the presence. So you need to do little things to become more comfortable with the state of pure awareness and not thinking.

For example, it sounds a little silly, walk from point A to point B. It could be just as little as from the chair to that vase, or vase, as it's called in America. You can walk from the chair to the vase, vase.

It took me years, several years of living in North America before I could get myself to say tomato, because I'd lived in England for so many years and it was a tomato. But after a while, waiter smiled when I said tomato. And so eventually for a day came when I said tomato.

Okay. There's a vase, the vase. Can you walk from here to there?

This is point A, that's point B in pure awareness. So when you go for a walk, look at the tree that's right ahead of you there and say between here and now, I'll just be present with every step. And then you just walk and you are that field of presence.

It's not long, so it's not a big thing to achieve. So you just go, oh, wow, I wasn't thinking. Let's see if I can do it.

It's not a doing, it's you're letting go. The thinking is a doing. So you're letting go of the doing.

The only doing you do is the walking. And that happens by itself virtually because you don't have to do it. And while you walk, you can look around and be just very present.

You don't have to go as sometimes when they do walking meditation in Buddhist monasteries, they go. That's fine if it works for you, that's fine too. But it doesn't have to be that complicated, just walk.

And then the next tree, that's a little bit further. Just, so if you give yourself, you use that space, that external space and make it into a temporal space where in you practice the timeless presence between here and there. So that somehow it makes it a little easier rather than say, okay, I'll try and be present while I walk around here now.

Give you, later you don't need that anymore. Just a little, another thing that I often recommend as you may know, perform a small action in complete presence. It could be a simple thing as lifting a glass of water or any object and putting it from here and putting it there.

But the movement is not a means to an end. You're just present. You're not just looking to the end result.

You want to put it there, it's a normal thing, but just, or you can lift it and drink and just be, and then it travels back to the table and you're still not thinking. And then you put it down and then you can start thinking again. And then you need another zip of water.

In that way, you could get addicted to water. And if there is a source of suffering in your life right now, it can be, I'm not talking about any action that you can or need to take right now, then do it. But a lot of suffering in one's life does not involve any particular action that you can take right now.

It is, you carry it in your mental, emotional field. And any such suffering can be burned away, so to speak, through intense presence. Just go, no past, no future.

Just be the presence, intense. This is the sword, I occasionally use that expression, the sword of presence that cuts through time and suffering because in the absolute presence, suffering cannot survive. And people who evolve, awaken spiritually through being confronted with physical suffering or potentially life-threatening illness, some of them learn that lesson.

And the lesson is, I must not leave the present moment. We saw a clip yesterday where the woman learned to be in the present. I must not leave the present moment because the moment I leave the present moment, I begin to suffer.

That could be, if the doctor tells you you only have a limited time to live, then you have to, it's awful if you go thinking there, thinking about your past, thinking about your future, which is getting shorter and shorter. But just, so that some situations sometimes push you into presence, but you don't have to wait for life to push you into presence. You can actually choose presence.

So if you have a moderate amount of suffering in you at this moment, bring more alertness to this moment. Be more, turn up the light, the light of presence. It's a little bit like a dimmer switch.

You can turn it up and there's no tension involved in it. You just go, you're so present that past and future do not intrude anymore. And even thoughts, only little thoughts come and go, doesn't intrude anymore.

You just go, that is the mark of the Zen master. The Zen master is, you can see the old paintings, the old drawings of Zen masters, they all look. And what are they saying?

They're saying, I'm not leaving the present moment. And that's where their power comes from. And that burns away all suffering because suffering is here.

Of course, you could still have a toothache or you could still have physical pain, but that's not suffering, that's just pain. Suffering is what you built on top of that, psychological suffering. So once you separate to learn, once you learn to separate the situation from your interpretation, also you become present.

You can just as present with what the is-ness of the situation. Practice presence. Strange thing, I never write things down.

I was going to do questions, that the original idea was to do questions this afternoon. And suddenly I realized, no, well, it came from within. This needs to be about presence to remind them and bring back the energy of presence because that's the only thing this is about.

And what almost never happens, I'd scribble down a few notes. I never take notes to talks. I scribble down a few notes, I have to tell them this, this, this, this, this.

Very strange. Let's look at the notes. Oh, I've already said it all.

You see, you don't need notes. It's done. Another simple way, of course, is a conscious breath.

Brings you into presence. Conscious breath means now. A very quick way of taking attention away from thinking.

Just conscious means you feel the breath moving in and moving out. One conscious breath brings you into presence. And then you might even want to take a second conscious breath because it feels so good not to be stuck in your head, in your mind anymore.

And what does it mean it feels so good? You're getting in touch, perhaps just a little bit at first, with the source of all satisfaction in your life. I have had, as I mentioned before, I have had letters from people in prison who discovered this secret.

They were in prison, they are in prison, and discovered the source of true satisfaction, which is presence. And suddenly they go. They are free, internally free.

Being in the body is, of course, another way of being anchored in presence, particularly people who are very much in their minds. Feeling the inner body at the same time as you look around, feeling the aliveness pervading your inner body, and at the same time, having enough attention left to be aware of your surroundings, but no attention left for thinking. Because if you feel the inner body and you are perceiving your surroundings visually, through looking, listening, and feeling, you will not have anything left for thinking.

Try it now. Feel the aliveness. Can you feel the aliveness that pervades your body?

In your hands, your feet, your legs, the entire body? There it is. But you can still perceive the room.

Of course you can. And you can hear the sounds, the words. But there isn't much left for thinking now, because some of it is in the body and others is in sense perceptions.

Very little left for thinking, probably nothing. Isn't that wonderful? You don't have to think.

And then a moment comes, and that is your greatest achievement in life. You can achieve nothing greater. The moment comes when you simply say, okay, I'm not thinking now.

Don't need to think. And then you let go of thinking for a certain period of time. A minute, two minutes.

Occasional thought may come in and drifts out, doesn't matter anymore. And you perceive and you feel that presence. So you have the choice to think or not to think.

That's enormous power, that you're no longer at the mercy of your mind. That's the end of the matrix. And some of you, perhaps right here and now, I'm not going to ask, tell me whether you can do it or not.

Relinquish thinking at this moment. Just be, but it's not only, there's not just an absence of thought here. There is also the presence of presence.

It's not just a negative thing. There's no thought. But there's also something else and that you cannot define.

It has no shape or form. It's timeless. And that has always been there in your life.

But it was continuously overlooked because thoughts are so noisy and they took your attention away from it. So you may find something, or quite a few of you have already experienced similar things to what the stories I talked about that happened. Or you may find in the very soon, a similar situation where something goes wrong and you go, oh, well, that's a pity.

But the upset isn't there anymore. You still feel that underlying satisfaction. Or if there is upset, it's very much on the surface now.

It doesn't touch your deepest being anymore. There can still be a surface unhappiness, ripples on the surface, but it doesn't go very deep anymore. And sometimes not even that.

You lose something, something goes wrong, and immediately you focus, well, that's what it is. And the present moment isn't... Because of that, the present moment isn't really bad.

It's still the present moment, just as it was before. It always is. And you will find as presence arises more in you, something happens that when you are not very conscious yet, or fairly unconscious, when challenging things happen, you get more unconscious.

People, situations, you react, you get angry, reactive. And then when you reach a certain threshold, something challenging happens, and the presence in you intensifies and you go. So then any challenging situation pushes you into more presence rather than pulls you into unconsciousness.

That is a critical threshold where instead of pulling you into unconscious reaction, the same challenging situation forces you or pushes you into intensified presence. Because the degree of presence that comes through you, into you and through you can vary. It's not always the same intensity.

Sometimes it's a low intensity presence, and it tends to be a higher intensity presence when you're confronted with challenging people or situations. And when that happens, then you know that's a decisive dividing line between being pulled into unconsciousness by unconscious people in situations and being pushed into heightened presence by the same people or situations. So when that happens, you can go, wow, this is so great.

For example, when I sit in my room, there is an underlying presence. And so it's very pleasant. And I look around, don't necessarily have to do anything.

I look out of the window. I can sit there for a long time. I love sitting quietly, doing nothing.

So, I mean, not all the time. Sometimes I do things. And then the time comes, let's say, I look at my watch and say, oh, okay.

I realize even without words, oh, by the way, if you have a watch or a clock at home, you can practice, especially if it doesn't have numbers on it, but just can practice looking at it. And you can know what time it is without any concepts, words in your head, direct knowing. So you look and you know it's a quarter to six, but there are no words that say it's a quarter to six.

You can practice that. You just look and you know. And many things happen that in presence, you look and you know, but you don't have to call it anything.

That is non-conceptual knowledge. You can look at a person and know a lot about that person without any judgment. You can sense their being.

So the time approaches to come here and then give a talk. I've been sitting in my room and then I can feel, it's not a decision on my part at all. I can feel an intensification.

Suddenly, gradually it goes. Presence builds up. No tension in it whatsoever.

Just presence. The light goes up and then I go come here. There's a high intensity of presence.

It's very pleasant, it's beautiful. And when I go back to my room, the intensity decreases and it just goes. So it always responds to the situation, whatever it is.

When something goes wrong, it goes higher again. Not that there's anything wrong with talking here. That's a different matter.

Yeah. When a person comes, I used to see people a lot privately. I don't, haven't done it in a while.

Whenever they come into, they sit down, I look at them. They start talking to me usually about their problems and there's a presence goes. It almost seems to fill the room.

They go away. Presence goes, it doesn't disappear. It just goes, state of rest.

And there have been times, there are times when it comes for no reason whatsoever, very intensely. There have been times when I've, at night, I felt I was being connected to an electric socket and it goes, bleh. There was nothing to do.

But there may be a reason why that happened also, which I, my mind does not understand. So you are here to bring that into this world. Apart from the things you do in your life, they will flow into what you do in your life.

You bring presence through whatever you do. It doesn't matter what you do, whether you're a director or CEO of a company or whether you cut people's hair, makes no difference whatsoever. It comes through you.

Well, that's it, it seems.

[Speaker 5] (1:43:15 - 1:44:11)

My question is around, before you were talking about intensification of presence. So at times I've felt intense energy in my body, throughout my body, but that's more rare. And it's, I feel that I experience presence in more of an underlying calmness or, yeah,

calmness.

So my question is, is presence experienced, is there something consistent with presence? Is there something that's felt or a consistent feeling?

[Speaker 1] (1:44:11 - 1:49:53)

Do you mean, does it always feel the same? Is that what you mean, perhaps? Well, the, as I said, the intensity of presence can vary.

Then, so presence is the energy field. Now, this is very hard to talk about, but I'll just, I will make an attempt. It is almost as if there's a place inside from where presence emanates.

And that place is timeless. And I can only compare it in the sense-perceived world, you could compare to this, like the sun that continuously shines, and yet it has no form. So it's like a space, rather, out of which presence emanates.

So the sun isn't actually positive presence, but if you imagine that the sun were an empty space out of which the light emanates, then you get a better, this is closer to the truth of how it is experienced as you go very deeply into it. So there is a space within, or a spaciousness, that is the point out of which the emanation of presence happens. And that space is absolute repose, absolute stillness.

And to feel that in yourself is joy, very joyful, for lack of a better word. There's an aliveness there, but it is absolutely still. That's the core.

And that is, perhaps as I speak of it, you can get a sense within yourself what that is. You can only sense it when you're not thinking. You can't be thinking and sense that.

That's the innermost stillness within you. Out of that emanates presence, which can emanate directly from the body, can also move into your mind and begin to use your mind and inform the mind and speak through the mind. So there were times in my life when I was very passive for, you know my episodes on seeking on park benches, but even after that, for long periods of time, I was so immersed in that inner stillness that there seemed no point in doing anything.

And you don't need to go that way. I didn't have any guidance, so nobody could tell me what to do with that. So I gradually had to learn for myself that you can be active in the world and at the same time completely rooted in the stillness.

So you particularly mentioned the state of calmness when you can feel it. So it may be that you have that connectedness with a still point within and feel that very strongly. It's very hard for people to, people also differ in their choice of words when they speak about it.

So you could ask, if you go to India or you go to any Buddhist country, you may find that, ask them about spiritual awakening, you may find that the words they use to describe it are very, very different. And only if you know already from direct experience what it is they're talking about, you can recognize that they're talking about the same thing. So I've already said too much about it because what I have said, those words may not be what the words that you would choose to talk about your experience of presence.

So are you able to suspend thinking for certain moments without going to sleep?

[Speaker 5] (1:49:54 - 1:49:55)

I'm not sure.

[Speaker 1] (1:49:56 - 1:49:58)

Okay, try it now.

[Speaker 5] (1:49:59 - 1:50:09)

Okay, stop. Okay, how was that? I don't remember a thought.

[Speaker 1] (1:50:10 - 1:50:15)

Okay, so there was no thought because not thinking is not memorable.

[Speaker 5] (1:50:16 - 1:50:18)

Yeah. Okay.

[Speaker 1] (1:50:19 - 2:06:03)

Now, this is very significant. So the mind doesn't know what to do with not thinking because the mind is thought. The mind cannot really appreciate how important not thinking is because what the mind is interested in is, let me ask another question.

That's what the mind is interested in. It's not interested in stepping aside and allowing no thought to arise. So the mind has a certain momentum.

The most important thing is to become familiar with that state of no thought. Far more important than any question that could arise in your mind or any answers that the greatest spiritual teacher could give you. So that's why I mentioned, I believe, in the New Earth, I was visiting that big center where they offer countless fascinating courses on developing this and that faculty and spiritual development and physical development and all kinds of huge number of courses are offered.

But you can have anything, a menu of courses. You can pursue any interest, wonderful and fascinating. So I don't know if you remember reading it.

I wrote, somebody came to me and showed me that program, that menu of fascinating courses and workshops. Said, which one do you think is most suitable for me? And I looked through it.

I said, there's so many, I don't know. But I can tell you this. What, well, the way I put it at that time was, be aware of your breathing just for a few days and you will gain more than attending any of these courses.

And it's free. Be aware of your breath as you go through daily life as much as you can. What does that imply?

That implies there's a space of no thought. Because you cannot be aware of your breath and think at the same time. So if you want rapid acceleration of spiritual awakening, this, by the way, is the last question for tonight appropriately.

If you want rapid acceleration of spiritual awakening, don't ask another question. Because the next question and the next and the next won't get you any closer, especially after. As you can see, I'm winding down the question.

Especially after being here for several days, I have said all that can be said about spiritual awakening. The next step is up to you and it does not consist in, well, let me see. No, I need to, something else I need to know.

I know that some questions are helpful because, but ultimately, the most essential thing is bring presence into your life now, for example, by being aware of your breath as much as you can. It's just one way of bringing presence in. Or feel the inner body as much as you can.

And that's rapid. Or if you can, just step out of thought already without using any of those portals. Just move out of thought.

And some of you can do that already. Then choose that as much as possible in your daily life. Choose to be in thoughtless awareness whenever you don't actually need to think.

And that's quite a lot of the time, especially moving from here to there, doing habitual things, listening to people talking. Be the presence. That's the spiritual practice.

There's no other spiritual practice. Everything else would point to that. But this is the most direct spiritual practice.

And very rapidly, you'll find the shift happening. But it's your choice now. Before, unconscious humans don't have a choice.

When there's no inkling of awareness in you, you don't even know that apart from your thoughts, there's anything else in you, you have no choice. You are being used, you are possessed by thought. You have a choice.

Now, with choice comes responsibility because the moment you have that choice, it implies that there is sufficient awareness in you for you to have choice. Once that has arisen, that choice becomes your responsibility. We have to look at it from that point of view because if people ask me, well, who is responsible?

Presence or you and all kinds of strange questions? The most useful approach is to see that you can choose to be present. That's your responsibility.

Choose to be present in many, many situations in your daily life. Choose presence over useless thinking, for example. When you're in bed at night, when you wake up in the morning, when you're walking in nature or walking to work from here to there or traveling on public transport or sitting in your car, stopping at a red light, choose presence over thinking.

You are able to do that. First, you have to remember that you have a choice. That comes one.

Okay, I have a choice. And then exercise the choice and take your attention away from thinking and put your attention on attention itself. Become conscious of being conscious.

That's your job now. And then you cannot not experience an accelerated arising of presence. It's that simple.

But the weird thing is many people who have the choice still do not exercise their choice. I'm now, what I just described is looking at it from one perspective. From another perspective, which is also true and actually more true but less helpful, it is true to say that when you exercise your choice of being present, what is really happening is that presence is choosing to manifest through you.

But what presence wants you is to feel that you can have that choice because it helps it to manifest. Ultimately, there isn't you and presence. You are an aspect of presence.

So forget about what I just said. But exercise your choice to be present, no matter where you are. And if you lose it, fine.

It's coming back again and again. Of course, you will drift off again sometimes. You drift off into thinking.

You may drift off into reactivity and find, but then come back. The moment you notice it, the moment you notice that you've drifted off into reactivity, your choice is to come back. If you cannot come back directly by saying, okay, I'll just be present, then use either your breath to bring you back, use the awareness of the inner body to bring you back, use some conscious movement to bring you back, or use sense perception to bring you back, looking without labeling.

It's all, all the, especially natural things are helpful. You look at them, look at your dog. He's not thinking.

So, and immediately, it's so easy to be present with an animal, with nature, with the sky. You can use those things as help. So, if you need some additional help to be present, use that.

I sometimes call that a portal into presence. Use the portal of the present moment, which is what present is. Okay, what's the problem right now?

What's wrong now? And then you have to, because the mind has been telling you for an hour that things are very wrong. And then you have to, well, what's wrong?

What's the actual problem at this moment, which after all, is all that ever exists? What's the actual problem at this moment? Well, this has just happened and this might happen.

No, this moment, nothing. I'm sitting here, breathing. There was a man working with Byron Katie, a spiritual teacher.

And he was talking about, oh, I'd love to have enough money and if I had enough money, what I would do, I thank you for your question. I don't know if this is still the answer to your question, but the man was saying, if I had enough money, I would move to Hawaii and that would be so great. That's my dream.

And she said, well, what would you do in Hawaii? He said, well, I would sit in a deck chair by the beach or in my backyard and look at the palm trees, breathe. And she pointed out to him, well, where are you sitting now?

Is the chair comfortable? Yeah. So what's wrong with that chair?

How different would it be to have just a slightly different view around you? You can be in Hawaii now. It's an inner state.

It's just the mind telling you, you need to be somewhere else in order to be happy. You need to be somewhere else. It's here now.

What's wise to seek, postpone fulfillment to some future imagined point, not realizing that the source of all satisfaction is within you already. And then sense that as your very presence. And then the rest is, as Einstein said, I want to know the mind of God.

The rest is details. The mind of God is consciousness. And everything else, whatever happens or doesn't happen, you catch the bus or you miss the bus, you lose money, you gain money, up and down, hot and cold.

That's all the details. So now you go to sleep, lie on your bed and feel the presence pervading the body. And when you wake up, before you do anything else, lie on your

back, feel the aliveness in the body, and then look around.

That's a good way of going to sleep and coming out of sleep. Improves your dreams too. Waking up in a dream, you might have had that once or twice.

You suddenly realize you're dreaming. And usually quickly the dream comes to an end. And what's happening here is really very similar.

You're waking up to your essential reality. And then your whole life feels a little bit like a dream unfolding, at least it does to me. But it's quite pleasant.

So you're awake and in the dream. That's lucid dreaming, they call that. And what we are doing here is called lucid living.

Very similar. Oh, tastes so good.

[Speaker 6] (2:06:38 - 2:07:36)

Thank you for this opportunity, for being here and allowing us to become more aware. And my question is a little bit of a follow-up from what you've just said. I know you work with psychotherapists and therapists in helping others.

And my question is, how can we follow up on the analogy of the caterpillar? How can we support others? How can we know if they are there, if they are not there?

Is it possible to help? I don't know what the question is, but it's, can we support someone in this process? You obviously are and Kim is obviously supporting us.

So is there different stages that we can support different people in different processes?

[Speaker 1] (2:07:37 - 2:15:32)

The moment the spiritual awakening, if we want to call it that, happens in you, which is the disidentification from the thinking mind and certain degree of arising of presence. Well, not the moment it happens, but a little bit after that, as this process continues, you, many people find that more and more people come, you meet people sometimes seemingly accidentally, or it might be people who you know already who need you, who also are at a stage of readiness, but don't know it yet. And you may find and will find that these people are drawn to you.

You may not immediately recognize them. In fact, you may think, listen, this person is not going to awaken in this lifetime, but you can get surprise, big surprises. Sometimes the most unlikely people can come to you and you know that that's happening.

There's a moment usually when you notice there is a transmission either of presence as an energy field, or they ask you a question, you give an answer, and the answer has a

certain power or aliveness to it. It comes through you spontaneously because the question was a genuine question and there was an opening in the other person. If it's not a genuine question, if it's a question asked out of curiosity, what's that spiritual stuff all about that you do or whatever, or tell me about that spirit stuff, but there's no real opening, then your answer will not be good, or there may be no answer.

But if it's a real question and there's some degree of presence in you, then there will be a real answer. And the helping then comes in two ways. One is through the energy that you emanate as you are present.

The second is through what you say to them. And that is the beginning of you becoming a spiritual teacher. And many of you, some of you are already spiritual teachers, whether formally or not formally, some of you will become formal spiritual teachers because the world is in great need of you.

Humans want you, they may not know it yet, but everybody, even if you do not become a formal spiritual teacher, you will do some teaching informally through everybody you meet because you spread, your state of consciousness spreads to others. That applies both to unconscious people who spread their negativity or the viral infection of their minds and to present people who spread presence. And it's not that you are doing it.

So an important obstacle could be if you think that you need to do something to help them. This is very seductive because it's a wonderful thing to help others. But the obstacle is you think that it is up to you to help them.

It's not. In fact, you wouldn't know how to. I wouldn't know how to.

So you have to allow it to happen by holding the presence, especially when somebody comes to you, ask the question or you say something, hold the presence and then see what happens. So it's not you who is doing it. Sometimes I've met some people who said they've been asked to, first they saw some individuals, helped them, they're growing and growing in presence.

And then somebody approached them, can you give a talk to our little group? And then they came to me and said, I don't think I'm ready to give it, to give a talk to a group. Somebody asked me to give a talk to a group.

I think I'm not ready. And I said, if you think you're ready, then that's not a good sign. Because there's probably a little ego in there that thinks I'm ready to be a spiritual teacher.

Just come to me and I will heal you. But if you feel that the most powerful place, whether you are with one person or with a group of people, the most powerful place is to not know. But you have to be comfortable with not knowing.

If you're uncomfortable with not knowing what to say, what to do, then you go, oh dear, what should I say? The mind says, quick, say something useful to this person. And then you think things you've read in a book.

Well, Eckhart says that, it doesn't mean you should never quote, but it's always more powerful if it comes from you. So it only comes if you are comfortable with, enter that space of not knowing, which is basically you surrender thought and you just look at the person and you listen and then see what answer comes, then see what you say, if anything. In some cases, you might not say anything.

So the help allow it to move through you. And that's a big relief. It means you don't have to do it.

You only become a vehicle for it, an opening for it. You become an opening for consciousness. So you don't have to heal people, help people.

I mean, you can help physically, that's a different matter. You can give somebody food or money to help, but at a deeper level, you can't do anything. So getting out of the way, and then it will happen through you.

In the course in miracles, it says the moment you become a student of the course in miracles, which by the way, is a lovely teaching, but not for everybody. So don't believe that because I mentioned it now, you have to go and get it. It's great for some people.

It's a beautiful spiritual work, but for others, it's not the right one. Nothing is right for everybody. Course in miracles, however, says the moment you start studying the course in miracles, which really implies the moment you begin to disidentify from the conditioned mind, you become a teacher of God.

Now the ego, of course, would probably love that term. That's just why I personally would not use it, but there is some truth in it. It's not a terminology that I would use, but the moment the presence arises, you begin to teach presence.

[Speaker 7] (2:15:32 - 2:15:39)

But really, presence does it through you. Thank you. Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (2:15:56 - 2:16:19)

So if anybody here wants to, is asked to give a talk, a spiritual talk, you don't need to be ready. Just say, yeah, I'll do it. And then you go there and you sit in front of the people and stop thinking.

Stop thinking and see what happens.

[Speaker 3] (2:16:36 - 2:19:03)

Hello, Eka. My question, I don't know if it's a I don't know question or maybe I don't care question, but it's on the topic of, maybe you can call it the phenomena. As I've sort of been practicing the power of now on the new earth over the years, it's helped me a lot, reduce my ego and my pain body.

And as that's happened, there's lots more oneness now emerging just naturally. And I can sense it and see it. And sometimes there's some phenomena that appears in me.

You know, sometimes once I had a cat on my chest and there was a woman laying in a bed next to me. And I said to her, the cat has a, you know, sore ear in the right ear. And it turned out to be her ear.

So I didn't get that, but yes, little phenomenas of coming. Sometimes I've seen things from people as well that, you know, once I went to a clairvoyant class and saw a man, the teacher of the class, he, while the class was being taught, he stood up and he said, look at me, I'm tall. And he looked like he was tall.

And as he was giggling and then as he sat down and he stood five minutes later, he stood back up and said, look at me, everyone, I'm short. And it looked like he was short. So he still looked like the same height, but I don't know, there was something going on with the perception and, but this is just phenomena that just one thing that I've seen and a few other little things.

And, but yeah, lately I've just been interested in the last few years, like documentaries on, like there's a young boy in Tibet, several years ago, he meditated for up to nine months and Discovery Channel filmed him 24 seven where he didn't eat or drink or sleep. Apparently there's many other stories as well. He got bitten by a snake and all that.

And, you know, there's another man and he hasn't eaten in 80 years and the scientists studied him for 10 days and he's fine. So yeah, just, I don't know if it's a relevant question, Okay, I understand.

[Speaker 1] (2:19:04 - 2:22:59)

Thank you. It sometimes happens that as you awaken spiritually, some people develop also certain psychic abilities. They might see things that other people don't see or you might know something that's going to happen beforehand.

Now, psychic and spiritual awakening don't necessarily go together. There are quite a few people who have psychic abilities and a huge ego. So they haven't awakened spiritually, but have certain innate or developed psychic abilities.

But it's possible that as people awaken spiritually, there can also be certain phenomena accompanying their spiritual awakening. It's a well-known thing and those things in India

are called siddhis, which are powers that develop as you awaken spiritually for some people, not everybody. And every true teacher will tell you that you should not give excessive importance to any powers, whether they be clairvoyant or clairsentient or whatever, that arise spontaneously during your spiritual awakening, because if you give them importance, they will lead you astray.

So you don't deny them, you recognize them, you say, hmm, that's great. If you give excessive importance, then instead of moving towards spiritual awakening, if that's like a, this is the channel towards spiritual awakening, then you have a little power that develops there. If you give that too much attention, you suddenly go off, you go off the main path.

And it usually involves ego. Look what I can do. I have met people who had powers of manifestation and many of these people have these powers at times and at other times they have to pretend that they have them, so they become half real and half charlatan.

Don't go that way and don't seek those powers because that would also be egoic seeking. And don't give too much attention to watching those things on YouTube and so on either, because that can also lead you astray. There are good things on YouTube.

I'm on YouTube too. So. And there are other teachers and teachings that you can watch.

So if you want to watch YouTube, although I mean the mind loves to get, oh, isn't that fascinating? But it doesn't get you anywhere. It doesn't contribute to your awakening.

So be careful with what you give your attention to. you can still occasionally enjoy a story like that. Like I watched this man who held his breath for seven minutes.

That was interesting. Later, I looked him up on, I must admit, I looked him up on YouTube and I saw a whole performance that he did on YouTube and I was impressed, but that's fine. I don't need to watch any more after this.

So stay with what really matters.

[Speaker 3] (2:22:59 - 2:23:01)

Wonderful, thank you. Thank you.

[Speaker 4] (2:23:19 - 2:24:36)

Thank you. I'm interested in what your awareness is about the transgender issue. It seems to be more prevalent now, but that just could be my limited thinking, but I see it more with the 16-year-olds and the younger generation coming through now.

And I just wanna know from that compassionate place and also, because I'm interested, I get confused in myself about is it an ego attachment or is it actually the awareness

coming through bringing androgyny and having respect for that, for the difficulty that these people are experiencing?

[Speaker 1] (2:24:38 - 2:29:44)

Right, thank you. Most people's sense of identity or part of most people's sense of identity is to do with their gender. So how large that part is varies from person to person and from culture to culture.

So by that, I mean a man feeling his sense of self consisting partly of his awareness of being a man. In some cultures, that makes up, in some cases, 70% of a man's identity is the fact that he's a male. These tend to be traditional cultures where the roles, the dividing division between genders is very pronounced.

And a woman equally in those cultures, a large part of her sense of identity or a sense of self would be around being a woman. In the Western world, this is not quite as pronounced, although it's still there, but there's less identification for a man or woman with being a woman than in some traditional cultures and than it was in the past in the West also. So especially with people becoming more conscious, the genders are coming a little closer together.

And that may well be true that there are more people now who may not even be certain what gender they are. And so that is not necessarily a bad thing, although it can be confusing for those people, because especially if they're young, because everybody's looking for a sense of identity, a clearly defined sense of identity. And if they don't know whether they're a man or a woman, then there seems to be something lacking.

They cannot form any clear sense of identity based on gender, which seems to be an obstacle, but does not have to be if they were given appropriate spiritual guidance. They could be shown. In fact, it could be an advantage to not know whether you are there or there, because it could make it easier for you to disidentify from identification with form, because ultimately that's what it is, male or female, male or female forms.

So if those people could be helped, then they would find out that actually it can be an advantage so that they can derive their sense of identity, not from the physical vehicle, because the physical vehicle may be uncertain. So they could perhaps more easily than somebody who feels very strongly, I am a man and you are my woman. Yeah.

Wasn't there a famous pop song? No, it was the other way around. It was the Canadian singer from Montreal.

What was her name? Celine Dion. I am a woman and you are my man, something like that.

So this is a good example of, and that was a very successful song because it

strengthened every woman who listened to that could identify with, yeah, I'm a woman, and then you were out in a bar, and then you meet a man, this could be my man. And the man did the same, oh, there's my woman. So you can see how much identity there is in that.

And it's ego, it's really, there's a masculine ego and there's a feminine ego. In some cultures, a woman has a particularly defined, in some cultures, it seems that every woman has a high-pitched voice, but it's because it's part of the ego role that they adopt. In other cultures, a woman is conditioned to behave in a particular way.

She behaves in certain constrained way, just can't laugh too loud. There was even a pronouncement made by a politician in one of those countries, a woman should not laugh in public.

[Speaker 8] (2:29:44 - 2:29:48)

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

[Speaker 1] (2:29:48 - 2:34:18)

It's not becoming to a woman to laugh in public. So whereas in the United States, it's perfectly acceptable for a woman to laugh out loud. You see it often.

So it's a trap to derive your psychological identity from your male gender or your female gender. Both of them are trapped in their little worlds, their little identities. So we are going beyond that.

And I believe in the more distant future for mankind, the two will come together at some point. Anyway, that's, but for the time being, let's see if we can help those who are uncertain about their gender and point to them the possibility of not identifying with any gender and still, and so go deeper immediately. So maybe if you, anybody who comes into contact with young people who are uncertain, perhaps you could point that out.

It could be the beginning of a spiritual path. Sometimes the greatest difficulty in life or early in life is at the same time, the opening into spiritual awakening. So that can also be the case, or it used to be more so in the past for a gay person, man or woman, it still presents certain, even though now there's greater acceptance around it, it still presents certain challenges.

And in the past, it's been, it was a gigantic challenge because it was rejected by society. So in the past, if a man or woman was gay, immediately was an outsider, at least internally. And there was a, now it's much easier to, at least in Western countries, to accept that.

The trap here could be, there is another trap here that you find it sometimes with gay

people that instead of going beyond gender identification they have a very strong identification with being gay. So, and then they overemphasize the gayness and that becomes an ego role that they play. That was a trap for those people.

So every, there's always, you need to be beware because there are many situations where the ego can come in and use it for its purposes. I mentioned in the power of now for a gay person, the advantage is that to some extent, even though there's greater acceptance nowadays, a gay person can still feel a little bit of an outsider. And so that's always a great advantage for anybody who does not fit in totally with the mainstream because that can create an early disidentification from mainstream egoic identities.

And then the arising of spiritual awakening can become easier. It's the greatest difficulty, people who have a handicap, a physical handicap, for example. A dreadful thing to be born with a physical handicap, but also a great opportunity of disidentifying from the body, identification with a physical vehicle at an early age.

And again, the trap there is they could go the other way and build an identity in their minds around being a person with this particular disability, in which case you are trapped, there's another prison you're trapped in, in your mind. So it's a subtle thing, but very interesting. I hope this helps a little bit.

[Speaker 7] (2:34:19 - 2:34:19)

Thank you.

[Speaker 4] (2:34:20 - 2:34:23)

Thank you very much. And thank you for your sensitivity. Thank you.

Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (2:35:23 - 2:57:33)

Welcome. I'm on my little summer retreat. It's quite hot.

And I'm glad we were able to make it. Join us, despite the fact that I believe right now there's a very important event happening on the planet, which involves 24 men chasing one ball. So if you're here, despite that, I'm very happy.

And if you are tuning in from Brazil and you've been experiencing some unhappiness, also connected with these 24 men, or perhaps a different set of 24 men, then you may want to look more deeply into the cause of that. And if it hadn't been Brazil, it would be some other country. The mechanism is the same.

It all goes back to not realizing who you are. And identifying with something else, using an image in the mind, personal or collective, and endowing that personal or collective

image with a sense of self. And if that happens, something happens to that mentally created image, personally or collectively, you feel injured, hurt, or diminished in your sense of self, and you become unhappy.

So that's a very normal thing. Most humans, except for those who already are in touch with that dimension within that lies beyond this superficial realm of delusion, most humans then have a number of things that they derive their sense of self from partly collective, partly personal. Collective could mean your nation, your tribal identity, which relates to sport teams and so on, religion, my religion, our religion, or a particular church or movement within one religion as opposed to another church that's different.

Nationalism, in some places, is still strong, not as insane as it, perhaps, as it was in the 20th century in many places. And many other collective identification from my club, my town, my this, my that, or our, and then personal possessions, status, recognition from others or lack of it, knowledge, personal appearance, external appearance, and so on, all things the mind identifies with. Very precarious because basically they're all mental fabrications, stories.

There's nothing wrong with mental fabrications and stories, you can enjoy those as long as you know that's what they are. But if you take them to be ultimate reality, then very quickly you begin to suffer. We continue to live surrounded by these stories.

Enjoy them, you can watch the game, you can even be happy if your team wins and the other team loses, but it doesn't go that deep anymore. So if your team loses, yes, there's a surface dissatisfaction which you observe, or if your team wins, there's a surface elation, you go, oh yeah, but it doesn't go that deep. Because on a deeper level, you know that that has nothing to do with who you are.

It's a game, it's a story, a play, a dreamlike formation. Now mostly in a dream, you don't know that you're dreaming. Occasionally it happens that you have a lucid dream and you suddenly, in the middle of a dream, realize that you're dreaming and then there's a fundamental shift in the way in which you experience the dream.

And the same in daily life, most people are so identified with mental formations, things, events, and so on, which all become mental formations, that the lucidity factor is missing. So they are in the dream of daily existence, but so identified with it, they don't know it is a kind of dream. So they try to derive a satisfying sense of self from it, which is impossible.

Now the equivalent of having a lucid dream or realizing in the middle of the dream that you're dreaming is, of course, to become aware in your daily life. Suddenly there is an awareness. Which is not a thought.

The awareness, sorry, from the dimension of awareness, you can recognize a thought as

just a thought. And you realize who you are essentially is that deeper aware presence, the lucidity that enables you not only to have sense perceptions, but also enables you to have thoughts. That is lucid living.

So you have, you can have lucid dreaming, but more important, it's much more important to experience lucid living. And that is the beginning of the end of misidentification with who you are. And what then happens is that there can still be minor manifestations of happiness and unhappiness, but it doesn't go that deep anymore.

Now, some people might say, okay, I'm okay with unhappiness not going that deep, but they might feel uneasy with happiness not going that deep anymore. What I mean, of course, is the, what is conventionally called happiness is a temporary surface phenomenon. But there is a deeper happiness, if we even still want to use that term, usually I don't, but there is a deeper sense of presence, of rootedness, of vast spaciousness, of aliveness, that is sometimes called joy, but you can call it inner peace.

You can call it a deep sense of contentment in the background. And this is why we're here, to be reminded that that dimension is there within you, waiting to be discovered or waiting to reveal itself to you. Or if you already live in connectedness with that, to deepen it, that's why we're here.

So the question then, of course, is, do I know who I am? Beyond my physical body or beyond my external appearance, beyond my place in society, beyond whatever country I happen to belong to because I happen to be born there, beyond my religion, which again, in most cases, is my religion because I happen to be born in a particular place, beyond my social function, status in society, or beyond my possessions. And all those things I mentioned are really, they may have an external existence, but you experience them as images in your mind.

And of course, you are the presence behind those images and even within those images. So right now, there's a chance for you to stop thinking, not through any kind of effort, not through any willpower, act of will, not through suppression of thinking, but simply because you realize that right now, thinking is not really necessary. You don't need to figure out what I'm talking about by thinking about it.

You understand the words, so of course, there is some mental activity, but the words are not understood on the level of mental concepts. They are understood by you at a deeper level where the truth that these words point to is immediately recognized as your own presence. So the only presence, when words point towards presence, only the presence in you can recognize the meaning.

And you go, oh. And you might not be able to explain it to anybody. It's just the simple fact that you are conscious right now, which is beyond doubt.

Everything else may be a kind of dream. But there must be a consciousness for the dream to appear. It appears in the light of consciousness.

I am that. I'll speak for you and for myself. I am that I am.

I am. I am conscious presence. I am consciousness, formless, timeless.

And I know myself. As the formless, timeless consciousness. But that knowing can only arise between two thoughts or in the absence, temporary absence, cessation of thought, like now.

Between this moment, because on the external, there is a time, on the deeper, there's no time. Between this moment, now, and this moment, now, there's no thought. That's a very amazing thing.

So let's try it again. I say now twice, and in between the two nows, see if you can just be there as the presence. Now.

Now. Well, that wasn't that difficult. Now a little longer.

Now. Now.

[Speaker 8] (2:57:43 - 2:57:43)

Now.

[Speaker 1] (2:57:47 - 2:58:10)

You can either close your eyes, or you can look into my eyes. It may be helpful to look into my eyes because I'm not thinking. And that can connect you with the state of not thinking.

We'll do it again. Now.

[Speaker 8] (2:58:28 - 2:58:29)

Now.

[Speaker 1] (2:58:37 - 3:17:45)

There's nothing more important in your life, and I'm totally 100% confident and certain that that's the absolute truth. There's nothing more important in your life, no matter who you are, than accessing that dimension, which is not only the dimension of your true identity, but also the place where true intelligence arises, and creativity, and peace, and loving kindness towards all beings, because that is the formless realm of life itself, of consciousness itself, that then recognizes itself in all other forms. So it's vitally important.

And last but not least, you no longer get very unhappy when your team loses. So another way you can, if you want to practice with inner spaciousness, aware presence, you can also go like this, and for a moment, this, the hands, I'm holding my hands like this, this space between the two hands represents the space of presence. So you go, holding the space of presence.

This is the external equivalent of something inner. So you can think that past is here, future is here, thinking is here and here, which is past and future, and in between there's the space. So you can sometimes do it when you're alone.

Just go like, just for 10 seconds, 20 seconds, and just be present. No thinking. This is the space of no thought, but alertness.

Many moments of no thought during your daily life, and then if you invite them, they will happen more often, until at some point, the sense of presence is never lost even while you're thinking. They're still in the background. A certain sense of beingness or space that is recognized as more important than whatever is happening in your life.

Whatever you need to deal with at that moment, whatever is going on, there's something more real, and that also gives you a true perspective on the ups and downs of daily existence. It's almost as if you had a detached view of things, so that the term detachment is something that's associated with the state of presence. It enables you not to be attached to things, which ultimately means mind stuff, not to be attached.

Attached means seeking your identity, your sense of self in those things. Detached means realizing they are not yourself. They are anatta, as it's called in the Buddhist Pali scriptures, not self.

They are, another Buddhist term, anicca, would be impermanent. They don't last, they come and go. If you don't realize that, you don't realize who you are, then you suffer.

And then gradually the ability arises to do things and to observe things and to listen to somebody or listen to the sounds of nature or listen to any sound without any interpretation in the mind, without naming it, without immediately liking or disliking it, without wanting to attract a certain condition to yourself or feel wanting to reject a certain condition. So that's the ability to perceive without naming. You can look around the room or out of the window.

And it's an amazing thing if you can be just the presence behind the sense perception. You have gone beyond being merely a person. You have transcended all conditioning, thousands of years of conditioning, including, of course, all your family conditioning, cultural conditioning, and so on.

So being the presence, functioning as a person, but being the presence, and when that happens, then the person is a much more pleasant person than a person who is

disconnected from the being dimension, doesn't know it. It's always there, but it's not recognized. That person who is disconnected from presence, who exists only as a person, not as being, that person is a troublemaker.

They don't know that, they think they're doing what they need to do, but they are creating. When I say troublemaker, I, of course, mean, unknowingly, they create suffering for themselves and others. And they get upset very easily.

Any little thing that goes wrong immediately, they get upset. They are totally at the mercy of conditions, things that happen around them, what people say or do to them or about them, or what people fail to do or should have done or said. It's all very upsetting, isn't it?

And then there comes the righteous indignation and the blaming and the accusing of others or groups of others. And the labeling. And that's all the madness that, in a more extreme form, becomes violence.

Why? They don't know who they are. They think they're only this person.

And they're totally in the grip of the person which is their conditioning. And the person is, to use an Eastern term, a karmic entity, a conditioned formation. Often when I observe people, I can feel the heaviness that they carry of that personal sense of self.

Completely in the grip of their conditioning. And it's a huge burden to walk through life totally in the grip of your conditioning. No spaciousness whatsoever.

Always concerned, thinking of this and that and waiting to react to the next thing and looking out where the next little bit of satisfaction can come from or where the next enemy may appear. Some people who perhaps haven't had prior contact with anything spiritual may reach a point where they get tired of being themselves. Can often be misperceived as being tired of life, but really they're tired of who they are.

They can somehow sense the repetitiveness of all the stuff that goes on in their lives. And so that can be a good point to reach. You're ready to go beyond.

And that is not the time when you dump off the Golden Gate Bridge. That's the time you dump out of your conditioned sense of self. Oh, what a liberation that is.

Freedom. Freedom from the person. Once presence has manifested in your life as the first initial glimpses, you can choose presence more often.

That becomes your responsibility. At a deeper level, presence is choosing you, but let's not to go there right now. It's a helpful perception to feel that you can choose to be present right now.

You've chosen to be here with us, with me, and you're choosing to be present at this

very moment. So enjoy your freedom. The game of life by being lucid within it.

[Speaker 8] (3:17:54 - 3:17:55)

Thank you.

[Speaker 7] (3:18:42 - 3:18:45)

A moment of stillness before we start.

[Speaker 1] (3:18:46 - 4:06:50)

Not waiting for anything to happen, but just being in the moment now. Make sure you're comfortable in your own skin as you sit there. If you're not comfortable, then just notice that you're not comfortable and allow yourself to not be comfortable and then you become comfortable.

I have a little treat in store. We will talk about, not only talk about, but go into the essence of the book that has been with me, accompanied me for the past 30 years. A book that I've gone to, back to periodically.

I still go back to periodically, pick it up, read a page or two or three and meditate on it. It's one of the great treasures of spiritual literature and it is a book that was written in China 2,500 years ago, the Tao Te Ching. Now that's a huge, seemingly a huge gulf that separates us from that time period and yet the book is still vitally alive.

And if a book that was written so long ago is still vitally alive, it means it must have been written from a very deep place and point to something that is timeless. If it were not written from a deep, timeless place within the author and did not point to something that is beyond time, a book written 2,500 years ago would be irrelevant, meaningless, incomprehensible. Many books that were written 20 years ago are out of date or if you read yesterday's newspaper, it's out of date.

So for something to still be alive now and to be deeply meaningful to many people, there must be something there that is timeless and that is the essence of the book and that's what I would like to go into with you. So we are not going into a book, we are not just going to study a book, we are just using the text to go deeply within, to discover something within ourselves. So all that the book is, is a device that helps us discover ourselves, and our connection with the greater whole, the universe, whatever you want to call it.

So just very briefly, the historical context, it might be helpful to know just a little bit about that. This book was written about 2,500, 2,600 years ago in China, that in other words, 500 to 600 BC. Now that was a very exciting and meaningful time period, something incredible was happening during those, let's say, one and a half to two

centuries.

For the first time in the history of humanity, as far as we can see, there was a universal wave of spiritual awakening coming over the planet. At that time. So the author of the Tao Te Ching, Lao Tse, is a contemporary more or less of the Buddha in India.

So the Buddha and his teaching arose at the same time, approximately as the teaching of Lao Tse, the author of the Tao Te Ching. So there was the Buddha arising in India, beginning to teach, and another significant teacher in India whose teaching did not go very much beyond in India even to this day, but has remained very meaningful and profound in India, Mahavira, taught at approximately the same time as the Buddha, and it developed into Jainism, the religion, a very beautiful religion, still practiced widely in India based on ahimsa, nonviolence, and respect for all living beings. All those things were revelations when they first came into being at the time, the teachings. So we have the Buddha in India, we have Mahavira in India, at all arising at the same time in Persia, we have Zoroaster, sometimes called Zarathustra, not to be confused with Nietzsche's Zarathustra, which is a completely different character.

Zarathustra, the prophet in Persia. We have at the same time in ancient Greece, and that was a time before the famous Greek philosophers started to teach, Plato, Aristotle, Socrates. It was earlier than that.

Those were philosophers that arose for the first time there. They are called pre-Socratic philosophers because they predate Socrates. We only have fragments of their philosophy, but those fragments are enough to show us that their teachings were in some ways, this is how I feel, more profound than the later, more differentiated teachings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

My favorite pre-Socratic philosophers are Heraclitus and Parmenides, and we only have small fragments, but the fragments show us that those teachings were still in touch with the source of being, the source of life, the oneness that underlies all phenomena. And later, as the philosophy became more differentiated, that was becoming lost. The philosophies became very interesting and much more differentiated, but the connection with the root of all life, the unmanifested oneness, the transcendental dimension, gradually became lost.

So those philosophers, 500 and 600 BC, still had that connection. And they showed people, they also realized that humanity had lost it. So it was part of the wave of awakening that was coming over the planet, the teaching of those philosophers.

This is not philosophy as we understand it these days. It's about inner transformation, not speculation. Those were not speculative philosophers in the same way that Buddha wasn't speculative, Mahavira wasn't speculative.

So it is a transformational teaching. It's about inner transformation, not about figuring something out with your mind. So we have that arising, the awakening arising in Persia, the awakening arising in India, the awakening arising in ancient Greece.

And now we come to China, we have Lao Tse, his teaching at the same time was arising in China. All part of this wave of awakening that we are now experiencing again, even on a much larger scale now. So we are at a similar time period, except that the wave of awakening that is coming into this world of spiritual awakening is on a much larger and more powerful and all pervasive scale.

So we are in the middle of that. 100, 200 years ago, nobody in the West was discussing the Tao Te Ching. And this is why we can go back to it and understand it, because we are awakening.

Lao Tse was, we know very little about his life. He was, they say, in charge of the archives of a kingdom called Shu and reached, we don't know how old he was when he was becoming bored with the life of the court and the intrigues and the conflicts around him. And so he decided to leave his job and to leave his homeland and just go out into solitude.

And the story goes, nobody knows whether it is true, that he left and he got to the border of the kingdom. There was a front, a little border crossing and a gate. And the gatekeeper said, I'm not going to let you pass unless you write down your wisdom.

So he must already have had a certain reputation as a wise man, but he had never written anything. And so all he could do, he said, okay, then I'll write it down. We don't know how long it took.

He wrote it down and the gatekeeper let him go. And that is the Tao Te Ching. That is the teaching and that is the book.

And then according to one story, the last we ever know of him, he was sitting on a water buffalo riding off into nowhere. And that's the last that anybody ever heard of him. Nobody ever saw him again.

That's one version of the story. Another version of the story is that he continued to teach and reach the age of 160 years. The Tao Te Ching is the title of the book, which is not usually translated.

People have tried to translate it, but unsuccessfully. Usually they give you subtitles. So it says Tao Te Ching.

One of the traditional subtitles is the way and its virtue. And that's already somewhat of a mistranslation. Although Tao can be translated as the way, you just can't translate Tao.

Even if you translate it as way, it's pretty meaningless. And if you're a Chinese person, you're not at a great advantage. You still won't know what Tao is.

So you're not at a great advantage. The Tao is something that cannot be named. And we'll come to that in a minute.

So the subtitle, the way and its virtue. Virtue is a mistranslation of the Te in the Tao Te Ching. Virtue has become a dead word in our language.

When did you last say virtue? When did you last use that word? Probably many years ago, if ever.

So the word virtue is not alive. What it really refers to is the power. So to translate, it's the power of the, of spirit, of the transcendental dimension.

The way and its power is a better subtitle for the Tao Te Ching. The way, how to live. The way to living, living in alignment with the one power that underlies the universe.

The one thing that you cannot name, that is not a thing. Living in alignment with the ultimate, which sometimes is called God, but the moment you call it God, it's not it. You've made it into something.

It is not something. It is something that flows through the entire universe, animates the entire universe, and at the same time is beyond it. That is the Tao.

And that is something that you can discover within yourself. You can live in a way that connects you with the inner source of all life, of all being. So the way and its power, it's the, he's teaching us how to live so that we are in alignment with the power that underlies all life, which as Lao Tzu says, for lack of a better word, I'll call it the Tao.

And the Tao, that's a good thing because you can't do much with a word that you cannot exactly see what it means. The same way that Buddha used the word emptiness, you cannot worship emptiness. It's almost, it's a negative term.

It negates form. So it's always been the tendency for humans to worship concepts. The concept of God arises in your mind and then you start talking about God.

The concept of God becomes an idol because it's no more than a thought. So you can't do that with a Tao because you can't picture it. You can't form an image of it in the same way that you can't form a picture or an image of emptiness.

So that is the transcendental reality that the book points to and it shows us the way to it. So there's great power there. And the book came to me for the first time in my 20s, maybe mid 20s.

Somebody said, have a look at this. This is interesting. And I looked at it and something

drew me into it but then I couldn't quite, it was so obscure that I couldn't, I knew there was something hiding there in the book.

There was some truth hiding but I couldn't get it. It was there and then I put it aside and okay, I have other things to do now. And then years passed and then in my early 30s, I rediscovered the book in a different translation.

There are many translations available and not only was the translation better, something had by then taken place within me and awakening a shift in consciousness. And through that new consciousness, I looked at the book and I said, wow, that's, he's talking, I know what he's talking about. I realized the depths and the profundity of what those words were saying.

And since then, the book in different versions, not the actual physical book, but the Tao Te Ching has never left me. It's always been with me in one way, one form or another. So that's the story behind the Tao Te Ching.

And now let's see if we can go a little deeper into it. We are going to use, there are two translations that at the moment are my favorites. We will use Stephen Mitchell's translation, fairly recent Tao Te Ching.

Another translation that I've had for a number of years that I'm very fond of is by Jia Fu Feng and Jane English. They together translated the Tao Te Ching. And that's another beautiful translation.

I will be using mainly for today, Stephen Mitchell's translation or version of it. And the first two lines of the Tao Te Ching are very famous. I've quoted it quite a few times, but even there, sometimes translations differ.

The first two lines are the Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. What he's saying is you cannot really speak about the ultimate reality. Whatever you say about it is not it.

However, he then continues to talk about it. So how is that? Well, he's telling you not to attach yourself to the words, not to begin to believe in the words or in concepts, not to make it into some new belief.

The truth is not in the words. That's what he's saying. The truth, the words only point to the truth.

And the truth is only to be found within you beyond the realm of mind or of thinking or of concepts. So that's just a little, very important, those first two lines. The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.

Okay, and now let me tell you about it. Because the Tao is in you and the only place where you can discover it is in you. And so the book shows the way to discover who you

are beyond who you thought you are beyond whatever your mind is telling you who you are.

And now the closest he comes to defining the Tao, which cannot be defined. I'm just saying the closest he comes to defining it is in these little lines, which I will read to you now. And again, you need to listen to that, not just with your head, but you need to listen to that with your belly or your entire being, those words, because you cannot understand them just through the mind.

If they are meaningful, or if you can sense the power that is in the words, then you are sensing your own power beyond thought activity. There was something formless and perfect before the universe was born. It is serene, empty, solitary, unchanging, infinite, eternally present.

It is the mother of the universe. For lack of a better name, I call it the Tao. Note that he begins by saying there was something formless and perfect before the universe was born, before the arising of form, before the Big Bang, you could say.

He uses the past tense. In the next line, he says, it is serene, empty, solitary. It is not only that which was there before the world came into being, it is that which continues to be there timelessly at the core of your being.

That which was there before the Big Bang is still present in you, the unmanifested one life, one consciousness, without which you are nothing. It is the essence of who you are. And of course, if you say that to a normal materialist scientist, whatever, I'm saying a normal scientist, not a great scientist, then he will say, what is this nonsense?

Or if you tell it to somebody who is totally close to you, they'll say, this is mumbo-jumbo. There was something before the universe was born and there's something, what are you talking about? And now listen, he very wisely, Stephen Mitchell, put in a little quote by one of the great scientists, Albert Einstein, what he had to say about it.

Somebody who did a lot of thinking, but whose thinking was rooted in the stillness, which as we shall see is an essential part of the teaching of the Tao. His thinking was rooted in the Tao, in the stillness beyond the noisy mind. That's where Einstein's realizations came from.

And so he was not just trapped in his noisy mind like most scientists and then deny the reality of the transcendental, but he was connected with it. And he said, I'm not used to quoting from books and talks. Here's Einstein talking.

The scientist's religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that in comparison with it, all systematic thinking of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection. This feeling is the guiding principle of my life and work. The recognition of a vast intelligence

that underlies all of creation.

Instead of saying what, somebody, something more intelligent than me, that can't be, that's mumbo-jumbo. But something that I can't understand, I can't categorize, what mumbo-jumbo is that? This is what the Dowdy jingle standing on tiptoe and you're not stable.

It's in the flower. It creates that. It's in you.

It pervades the very space around us. It comes through the human brain, becomes, the brain is like a, gives it some form. And when the brain goes, it no longer goes through that form.

It's the very consciousness that you are. So this shows that Einstein was in touch with that dimension. That's why his thinking was inspired.

That's why he had sudden revelations. Now, now we come to the first slightly longer, just a few lines, never more than a few lines at a time. How to live, to be in touch with that.

Can, I'll read the whole, this little section first, and then we'll look at the lines and go into it. Not just, not with the intellectual mind, but sensing our way into it. Can you coax your mind from its wandering and keep to the original oneness?

Can you let your body become supple as a newborn child's? Can you cleanse your inner vision until you see nothing but the light? Can you love people and lead them without imposing your will?

Can you deal with the most vital matters by letting events take their course? Can you step back from your own mind and thus understand all things, giving birth and nourishing, having without possessing, acting with no expectation, leading and not trying to control? This is the supreme virtue.

For virtue, substitute power. The power moves through you. If you live in that way, you become it.

You realize your oneness with it. Back to the beginning. Can you coax your mind from its wandering?

It wanders about. If you look at your own mind, that's what it does. It goes from one thing to another, one thought leads to another thought, and it goes on and on.

Sometimes I call it the voice in the head. Can you coax your mind from its wandering and keep to the original oneness? In other words, is it possible for you to sit still for a moment and don't give attention to every thought that says, follow me, I'll show you the way.

That's what every thought is. I'm important. Think about this, think about this.

Okay, and once you follow up one thought, and then it becomes another one and another. Stream, then you get, that's how most people live. Continuously immersed in just chatter, mental chatter, streams of thinking.

It's even become literature in the 20th century. It's called the stream of consciousness. James Joyce, you get 30 pages without any punctuation marks.

Just, he wrote down how he observed his own mind and he wrote down how it works. It goes on and on. No period, no comma, nothing.

Normal. So once you know that, and most amazing is people don't even know that. They are so identified with it.

It's just, that's who I am. I just, I think. It's not even that they say, I think, because they are the thoughts.

And they miss the vast dimension with these underneath thoughts. That's why I say, okay, just don't give all that importance to your thoughts. Just come to a point of rest.

This is where the present moment becomes so important because it's the present moment that can take you out of the stream of thinking. Just becoming alert to this moment. There's nothing much to think about as you sit here.

What can you add to this moment that's better than what's already here? Or when you look at a flower, why add thought to it? Or when you look at another human being, why add thought to the beautiful perception of that?

So then you keep to the original oneness. The moment you're no longer dominated by thinking and you realize there's a realm beyond thinking inside me, you're connected to the oneness because it's only through thinking that the illusion of separation arises when you start calling things this and that and judging and naming. Doesn't mean you can't do it anymore, but you're not trapped in it anymore.

Can you let your body become supple as a newborn child? When you are immersed in thinking, your body becomes rigid because it reflects what's going on in here, a lot of which is problematic. I need to think about this.

And the more problematic your thinking is and all thinking is problematic, the more lifeless your body becomes and the flow of energy through the body diminishes. You get rigid, you get tense, you're holding in. Can you let your body become supple as a newborn child?

This is a free translation. If you go back to the more literal translation, he's actually saying, can you concentrate your chi or your vital energy until your body becomes

supple as a little child? This is really, he's teaching body awareness.

Can you go within, take attention into the body and to feel that you're alive inside? Can you feel the aliveness in your hands? Can you feel the aliveness in your feet?

Can you feel the aliveness that pervades the entire body? Takes you out of your mind. Even as you sit here, can you feel that?

There's a very ancient Taoist practice, thousands of years old, almost as old as the Tao Te Ching, which tells you, you should breathe with your heels, from your heels upward. Says, can you breathe from your heels upward? Of course you can't because you can't suck in air with your feet.

But it's just, what it's saying is, it is directing attention to your feet and you imagine that you're breathing from down there. You're breathing through your heels. What that does is, you suddenly become aware it starts from the bottom of your entire energy field.

I'm breathing in, just simply imagine are you breathing in from your feet? Energy starts to move in from down there. Imagine that you're actually breathing in from your feet and then the energy of the breath flows into the body.

Very ancient practice. That particular one, I only discovered two days ago that somebody, thousands of years ago, they recommended that already. And I said, oh, that's the inner body.

That's what I was talking about. I always talk about. Can you cleanse your inner vision until you see nothing but the light?

That is perhaps a somewhat obscure, although there's light in it, but to the mind, it's a little obscure. What do you mean, cleanse your inner vision until you see nothing but the light? The light is the light of consciousness.

Cleansing your inner vision as to still the mind until you become aware of awareness, until you become aware that you are conscious. And then that remains always there. The entire, this entire little chapter is really how to be in the world, but at the same time, connected with the source.

At this moment, it might be easier if you forget. Don't think of yourself as somebody having a past. Don't think of yourself as somebody having a future.

What's left of you right now without that? Consciousness, just a presence, not an opinion or memory. That's the light of consciousness.

And that's the Tao, really. You cannot grasp it. You cannot make it your object of knowledge and say, oh, there it is, there's the light of, I can see the light of consciousness.

No, you are the light of consciousness through which everything is seen. You can't see it, you can't grasp it. It underlies everything.

It's so there, it's who you are. It's your presence. And when I say your presence, it's not quite right because it's not yours, it's you, it's oneness.

If I say your presence, then there's you and presence, but language works in that way. It creates duality. And that's what the Tao Te Ching is about, is realizing that that's an illusion.

Can you love people and lead them without imposing your will? This is imposing your will in another translation. It's always helpful to look at different translations.

It says, can you be without cleverness in this world? I talk about cleverness in one of the books, that the ego is clever because it tries to work out some advantage for myself or for us. It has its little schemes.

It tries to use people, that's cleverness. Politicians are clever, most of them. Very few are intelligent.

PhD doesn't mean you're intelligent. Well, whether they have PhDs or not, it has nothing to do with that. Intelligence is to see the larger whole of all and then not just act to enhance one little fragment and then be in opposition to the rest of the world of life.

But see the totality. Can you be without cleverness? Can you deal with the most vital matters by letting events take their course?

That's a very fundamental teaching of the Tao is not to interfere in the way things are moving. And even if, so you don't, there's no violence whatsoever. And that's of course beautifully practiced in all martial arts.

In martial arts, the opposing energy that is coming towards you is not resisted. This is deeply influenced by the Tao Te Ching, non-resistance going with the movement of life. The Western approach is somebody comes towards you and you hit back.

It comes towards you and you go. And the Eastern is it comes, the force is coming towards you and you go with it. And then suddenly your opponent falls.

The very energy of that attack movement is used to defeat the opponent. You have not opposed it, you go with it. There's almost, we can say, no violence in it and yet extremely powerful.

And that can be applied in many things. It can be applied in daily life and not getting involved in useless discussions, not identifying with mental positions of rightness. I'm right and you are wrong.

And then you start, this energy totally takes you out of yourself. Not engaging in useless discussions, being able to listen in a state of openness to another, not identifying with your opinions and then opposing somebody else's opinion. Can you step back?

Oh, before that, can you deal with the most vital matters by letting events take their course? Now, I looked at another translation. That's a little closer to the original, which says, instead of by letting events take your course, it says, by becoming the female.

Can you deal with the most vital matters by becoming the female? The female principle, female is often used as synonymous with the Tao. So one could almost say that the feminine principle is the principle of allowing, which is like this, whereas the male principle is this.

If you want to see it and express this, the male goes like that, the female goes like that. And according to this teaching, the female is, one could almost say, expresses the Tao more clearly than the male. It's somewhat easier to express the Tao through the female form than the male form.

If you're male, then you have to discover the female in yourself to be one with the Tao. Also, you have to discover that the allowing, for example, when I say, allow this moment to be as it is, that's a female, you're not fighting what is, you're allowing what is. There's an embracing, you see it when the, sometimes with Quan Yin statues, the holding hands like that or Virgin Mary statues, which are all expressions of the female, all embracing, all embracing.

Can you be the female in any situation? And that's, so in a discussion, can you be, now some women would say, oh, I don't like this idea, I want to be powerful, they don't realize that the power of the female is enormous. The power of allowing is far greater than the power of interfering.

Can you be the female? Let's see what else we have before we go to another longer one. How you receive this depends on your degree of openness to this message.

So this sounds very familiar to me, that's why I'm just reading it to you, just a few lines. Some say that my teaching is nonsense. Others call it lofty, but impractical.

But to those who have looked inside themselves, this nonsense makes perfect sense. And to those who put it into practice, this loftiness has roots that go deep. So there are some people in whom the openness is not there, and then whatever, what we are talking about here is totally nonsensical.

So you need, there needs to be something in you that recognizes the truth of this beyond words and concepts. Empty your mind of all thoughts. Let your heart be at peace.

I'm going to read the same again in a different translation, just give you a slightly different sense, different feel. Empty yourself of everything. Let the mind become still.

Empty yourself of everything. Empty everything. Let the mind become still.

Watch the turmoil of beings, but contemplate their return. Watch the turmoil of this world, of all the activity of this world, of all beings involved in running around. Watch it, which means be the awareness and contemplate their return.

They all return to the formless sooner or later. All the forms. Imagine you're seeing a movie.

I always, I love to see old movies, like movies made in the 30s or so, or 40s. And I love seeing, for example, you see street scenes, actual street scenes, big city, London, New York, whatever, people, hundreds of people running around to go about their business. But this is what the turmoil of beings, as it's called here, you have to see it.

And I see that in amazement, I watch that. This is for us to watch, but contemplate their return. And when I watch that, I realize all these people, the actual street scenes, all these people are no longer there.

They're all dead now. All, it was so important what they were doing, was it looked so important, running around, cars going. And if you had seen a speeded up version of the movie, as you see a speeded up version of anything, if you saw a speeded up version of this room, like you sometimes see how a flower, it's a wonderful image.

If you see, they do it on film, how a plant comes suddenly out of the soil. And so they, over a period of a few hours or a few days, it's filmed. So you see that period within a few seconds, contracted.

So you see actually how the plant comes out of the soil, then leaves come out of the plant, and the flower comes out. And suddenly you see the flower is wilting. The leaves are wilting and falling off.

And then the entire plant goes.

[Speaker 8] (4:06:51 - 4:06:52)

Gone.

[Speaker 1] (4:06:55 - 6:07:58)

This is what it's talking about. You have to actually see. It's an amazing thing.

When the touch, we'll touch to see that, when you truly watch that, something inside you goes, you can't put it into words, it goes, wow. Because you realize that applies to

everything in this world is that way. It comes into being, every body.

I'm really, I'm looking at my own body when I see it. It's just a slightly different version of that. It lasts a few years longer than the plant.

But if you saw even the baby growing into an adult, you go, maturity, vitally alive, physically active. And then gradually, winding down. And then beginning to look like a wrinkled apple or a pear.

And then, suddenly the life force leaves. And then soon later, all the molecules and atoms say goodbye, we're going our own way now. And there's nothing left.

Just an emptiness. If you saw this room and the people in this room, and let's see if we didn't move from this room and we had a camera here, you would see gradually the body's dissolving or evaporating, whatever, it would go very quickly. I sometimes compare them to soap bubbles popping.

So if you saw this, we had this camera here over a period of, let's see, how long do you want to live? 50, another 50 years. You would, then the soap bubbles would pop one after another.

Pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop. Nothing left. And then for a little while longer, the physical forms would stay.

And then you would say gradually, even the physical forms crumbling, they could take 2000 years or whatever, depending on atmospheric conditions. And even then the chairs could become dust. So everything is dissolving, birth, dissolution, everything, every form, it's impermanent.

And to watch, it's extremely powerful to watch that. This is why he's telling you, watch the turmoil of beings, but contemplate their return, means be aware of the impermanence of all forms, not as a negative thing, but simply as you see it for what it is. And if you are aware of the impermanence of all forms, that all forms are short-lived, how can you be aware of it?

There must be something in you that is beyond that. It's only from, as I sometimes say, if the entire universe were blue, the color blue would not exist for you because there would be nothing to differentiate it from. If we said everything is blue, you say, what are you talking about?

There's blue, what's blue? There's no other color. If everything were impermanent, you wouldn't even know it.

But there is something in you that is beyond that. It's only from there. And that is why the contemplation of impermanence can put you in touch with that because that in you,

which is the consciousness, the timeless presence, the light of consciousness, is not touched by that.

And then the question the mind asks is, well, but what about when I die, I lose consciousness, or if a brick falls on my head, I lose consciousness. What about that? That all it means is that consciousness can no longer flow through your brain into this world.

It then has to withdraw and seek another channel. Consciousness is not affected. You cannot lose consciousness.

Isn't that amazing? Why not? Because you are consciousness.

It's the essence of who you are. So you can't lose yourself. Consciousness, you can also say life.

You can call it life. You can call it Tao. It's the unmanifested, underlying the timeless essence of all life, that which animates all life forms for brief periods, each for a brief period.

You are that. You can't think about that. If you think about it, it doesn't make sense.

You have to sense that in yourself. Now, sense that. You can't know it as an object of knowledge.

You can only know it as yourself because it's the subject of all knowledge. Each separate being in the universe returns to the common source. Returning to the source is serenity.

Another word for serenity is stillness. All things return to the source out of which they have come, the life, the unmanifested one life. Returning to the source is stillness.

Now, the wonderful thing is we don't have to wait until we die to return to the source. To live a life that is filled with power and wisdom, we can return to the source before the body dies and live in a state of connectedness with the source of life. And that's why it says returning to the source is stillness.

When you find the stillness within yourself, you're returning to the source of all life. It is, what is stillness? Just a moment when you're not thinking, but still conscious.

Just an inner space, like now. Okay, ready for this? Here are all your thoughts, and now we go.

Then thoughts come creeping back, and then we go. And suddenly there's a, can you sense that there is a space inside you that's just conscious? Where you don't call yourself anything or call me anything.

You're returning to the source, to the formless, the timeless in you. If you don't realize

the source, you stumble in confusion and sorrow. If you don't realize the source in yourself, you stumble in confusion and sorrow.

That's how most people live, unfortunately. Stumbling about, unconnected with who they, disconnected from who they are, not realizing the source of their being. There is immediately, there's confusion, which is mental confusion.

The mind creating all kinds of pseudo problems. You yourself, you become a problem to yourself. You become a problem to others.

You become a problem to the planet. You become a problem, or you contribute to the problem making of the world, and that's the normal way to be. You stumble in confusion, and so that's confusion, and sorrow is the suffering that comes when you are not connected with that dimension in yourself, in your daily life, you suffer.

That's the destiny, that's what the Buddha said, life is suffering, unless you go beyond suffering, which is the teaching, it shows you the way, say as the Tao Te Ching does. Confusion and sorrow, you can't get rid of it, no matter how you try to rearrange your outer life, or think if I achieve that or that, I'll be fine, you won't. So you stumble in confusion and sorrow.

You need to find the source, and it's not even hidden, it's just there underneath the mental noise. So when you realize the source, realize of course doesn't mean you have some kind of intellectual idea about it, realize is when you have no idea, when the ideas, the importance of ideas diminishes, and there's just a space of awareness. Ideas are secondary.

In fact, you will have some interesting ideas coming out of that, creative ideas, new ideas, new insights, but they are secondary. When you realize where you come from, you naturally become tolerant, disinterested, amused, kind-hearted as a grandmother, dignified as a king, immersed in the wonder of the Tao, you can deal with whatever life brings you, and when death comes, you're ready. Beautiful images explains who or what you become when you live in connectedness with that, no longer as a little entity that thinks itself to be separate from the universe and from other human beings and from everything.

You become tolerant, disinterested means not uninterested, disinterested, amused, there's a little bit of amusement at all the things that people in this world feel is so serious and so important, and all their fears and ambitions and all the things they run after. You then become a little bit amused at all this, what is called the turmoil of beings, running around like little rabbits. All this, I have so many problems to think about, oh my God, what's happening?

Oh no, God, you become a little bit, you become amused a little, there's a slight smile,

you don't, but sometimes you might even laugh, but there's a slight, a little bit of a smile, because you know it's not ultimately real. What they believe to be so important is ultimately not that real, it's a temporary thing. It's relatively real, not ultimately real.

In other words, everything is a little bit like a dream. For example, what happened to you yesterday? Where is it now?

A little bit like a dream, whatever was important then, it's gone, even breakfast this morning. Okay, did I have breakfast or was it a dream? Not that much difference.

Or you come to the end of your life and suddenly you think back all those years, that was a long dream. Was it a nightmare? And you become kind-hearted as a grandmother.

Nice image, the grandmother who's already been through everything. It's a little bit like the big-bellied Buddha that you see that is influenced, the Taoist-influenced Buddha, the Chinese big-bellied Buddha. He sits there.

Sometimes people who think they have lots of problems in their lives, I recommend that they should get a big-bellied Buddha and look at it quite often when they think they have problems. And because the Buddha, he's actually laughing, he's had a huge belly and he always goes, ah, ah, ah, oh, it's not serious. It implies that he is connected with something deeper.

He doesn't take the world that seriously. And so his influence is beneficial. It's only people who take the world not that seriously, they can actually be of benefit to the world and improve the world.

But if you think that the world is absolutely serious, you're not going to improve it. You can just contribute to the madness. You will be fighting one or somebody or some organization or some group of people.

It's serious, serious. That little bit of detachment, you become the Buddha, the big-bellied Buddha or the grandmother, and dignified as a king with a certain dignity or integrity to who you are. The same dignity and integrity that each animal has that many humans have lost.

One with itself, every, I feel always when I look at a dog or a cat or a bird, whatever it is, it is one with itself, with who it is. It has enormous dignity. And then sometimes you can see the contrast if you look at a particularly silly human being.

And sometimes silly human beings have a dog that's very dignified. And the only times when they get out of their silliness is when they pet their dog. For a moment, they can truly be themselves for a moment.

With all other people, they're playing some kind of silly roles, not knowing that they're

playing roles. And then they come in. For a moment, their dog gives them the ability to relax for a moment and be who they are without pretending.

And that's why they don't know it. That's why they love their dog or their cat so much, because they can be themselves. They find themselves through that.

That's the integrity of the animal, the dignity of the animal. But it's in you also. This is a nice one about people who are in control of something, of an organization or a country or whatever, how to rule a country or an organization.

When the master governs, the people are hardly aware that he exists. Next best is a leader who is loved. Next, one who is feared.

The worst is one who is despised. If you don't trust the people, you make them untrustworthy. The master doesn't talk, he acts.

When his work is done, the people say, amazing, we did it all by ourselves. So the greatest ruler is you don't even, are not even aware that he or she is there. Hardly aware that he or she is there, does not interfere.

Never says, look at me, I did that. Identifying with their actions and taking credit for what they did. Look, I did that.

Or arguing with somebody, you didn't do it, I did that. That same thing can exist. This is talks about having gone beyond ego and beyond mind and identification with action.

You also find this phenomenon in some very simple people who haven't developed an ego yet. They sometimes do wonderful things, but there's no entity that says, look, I did that or how it feels, I did that. Beautifully expressed in the film, Forrest Gump, where the hero or the antihero does not have an ego, but he is below ego.

He helps many people and many good things come into his life but he has no sense of a separate self. He lives in the right way, not what this describes because this describes of going beyond ego, but he hasn't arrived at ego yet. So he still lives in the sense of oneness.

And if you live in the sense of oneness, the universe to a large extent becomes helpful. Helpful things come into your life because you are no longer separating yourself from life. That begins with being in a state of oneness with the present moment, accepting the moment as it is.

That's really all you need to do. Then you're in a state of oneness with life, not imposing anything on the present moment, judgments, reactions, and if they are there, accept that they are there. So you can always accept what is, whatever level.

I'll accept what is externally or accept what is internally. And now here's a very

wonderful thing about how your state of consciousness affects the world, that there's a correlation between the collective consciousness of humanity and the state of the planet. And there is a correlation between your state of consciousness and whatever happens to you, not always apparent immediately, but there is a correlation between what's within you and what happens to you or what you attract into your life.

And furthermore, it's not so much that what happens to you is your fate or your destiny. Your destiny is determined not by what happens to you, that's what people think, that what happens to me determines my life. Your life is determined, your destiny is determined by how you respond to what happens.

And what happens next is determined by how you react or respond to what happens now. So something seemingly bad happens, something goes wrong. If your reaction is negative, you attract the next negative thing.

If your reaction is a response that says, well, this is how it is, now let's deal with that. The next thing will reflect that state of consciousness. Many people are trapped their whole lives in a stream of same kind of unpleasant things happening continuously to them because they don't realize at any given moment there's a freedom for them to change their lives by reacting differently to what happens.

Your present reaction determines the future, not what happens. Your reaction to what happens determines the next moment. That's how you can change your life rather than being trapped in bad karma for a very long time.

Very easy, but it requires awareness. And here we talk, the Tao Te Ching talks about how the collective consciousness affects the planet. In harmony with the Tao, the sky is clear and spacious.

The earth is solid and full. All creatures flourish together, content with the way they are, endlessly repeating themselves, endlessly renewed. When man interferes with the Tao, the sky becomes filthy, the earth becomes depleted.

The equilibrium crumbles. Creatures become extinct. The master views the parts with compassion because he understands the whole.

His constant practice is humility. He doesn't glitter like a jewel, but lets himself be shaped by the Tao, as rugged and common as a stone. Beautiful images.

When humans collectively live out of touch with the greater consciousness, the Tao, the transcendent, the reality, whatever they manifest externally reflects that state of disconnectedness. And then the planet around them suffers. It's simply a reflection of a state of consciousness.

And so this eternal principle, he already saw 2,500 years ago. And that also implies that

the solution to what is happening to the planet cannot be found exclusively on the external level. Yes, of course we need to change things that we do on the external level, but unless the consciousness, the state of consciousness that is our habitual state changes, even if we remove one evil from somewhere out there, it will be replaced by some other thing that has the same harmful influence on nature and the planet.

So the fundamental is the shift in consciousness in humans, in humanity, but not waiting for others to change. Humanity is you. Humanity is I.

You are humanity. The shift in consciousness needs to happen in you, and then the planet will be saved. So that is vital.

Here we have the two beautiful lines. The master, the master always means the enlightened being, the being in touch with the Tao. Here he happens to use the he pronoun, but he changes continuously in this translation.

Chinese doesn't differentiate apparently with the pronoun. Traditionally, it's always he in the old translation of the Tao Te Ching, but in this Stephen Mitchell translation, he shifts continuously from he to she. It happens to be he here, but it doesn't matter.

The master views the parts with compassion because he understands the whole. He understands the whole. He's connected with the whole.

Then you can look upon the parts, the individual human beings and the many different life forms with compassion, because you recognize them as expressions of, manifestations of the one life that you also are. Manifestations or expressions of the one consciousness that is the essence also of who you are. And you see it, you feel, when you don't impose thoughts on, continuously impose thoughts on reality, but allow things to be, allow a flower to be with that spaciousness, spacious perception, a moment, another human being.

That's compassion comes out of that state. It's, and compassion has a deeper level to it. And that is the recognition of oneness.

Out of that comes true compassion. The recognition that in essence, you and I share a common source and consciousness, not just not a source in the distant past, a source we share a common source now. And that's not an intellectual thing.

The realization comes, the less you impose thoughts on other people, judgments, definitions, and on yourself. You start thinking about my life. What about my life?

And then you define your life as either good or bad, fulfilling or unfulfilling, satisfying or unsatisfying. And you have all kinds of opinions, all kinds of opinions about me and my life. And you have a whole structure in your mind develops that you call my life.

And for many people, that's that mental consists of thoughts all clinging together. This is all part of the edifice of my life. And it's here and they're all clinging together.

And people think that's who they are. It's just thoughts about its definitions about them. They're just thoughts.

And when you don't know that, that cuts you off from the power that is there underneath all that, the power of consciousness itself, the Tao, you're cut off and you live as if that thing were real. And you try to somehow make it better on the level of the thought structure of my life, or try to convince yourself that, oh, my life isn't that bad after all. And then you get a little bit of, okay, I'm feeling a little bit better today because I just had the thought that my life isn't so bad after all.

Or you see somebody who is in suffering, say, oh, I'm better off than that person. Then you have a little bit of happiness. My life isn't so bad.

Many people's lives are far worse than my life. Okay, I should feel good. Okay, a little bit of feeling a little bit good for a few moments.

But the structure of my life is not a satisfying one for almost anybody. If you don't go beyond that structure, you might think the people you read about in People Magazine or wherever are better off. They're just as unhappy as everybody else because unless they've gone deeper, some may have.

My life, it's a figment of the imagination. There's no such thing as my life. I don't have a life.

How can I have, what does it mean I have a life? I am life. I am an expression of the one life, the one consciousness, the Tao, expressing itself briefly through this form.

And the very power of all life is here. Why have some mental structure that gives me a sense of identity, that tells me who I am with definitions and judgments and not good enough or better than all kinds. Unnecessary, as sometimes called in the Tao Te Ching, unnecessary baggage.

Walking around with unnecessary baggage. My life is so heavy and it's hard. I have a hard life.

Where's your hard life at this moment? Uh, can't see it. It's only when I start to think about it, this is back, oh yeah.

But where is it ever now? It's an imaginary entity. The me that is up there, it's consisting of all kinds of thoughts and opinions is an imaginary entity, unreal.

And it's wonderful to see that in this moment, you don't have that baggage of my life. You are life right now, I am. I don't need to define myself mentally as either good or bad

or better than, or success or failure.

All that cuts you off from the power that's actually there of the Tao. So this is why it says, as we read earlier, empty yourself of everything it said, which means empty yourself of these ideas that otherwise dominate you, the ideas of who you are. Jesus said the same thing.

Almost literally to me, it means exactly the same. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Poor in spirit, that means inside you do not carry baggage.

The baggage of your thoughts of who you are. So the same thing, blessed are the poor in spirit means you are internally unencumbered by heavy thinking and identification and creating an image of who you think you are that becomes my life. And then you even believe that you could lose your life.

I'm going to lose, he lost his life. There must be, he must have been separate from life. Who was he if not life?

Without life, he isn't. He couldn't have been. You cannot be, you are life.

You can't separate yourself from life and say, I have a life. Who are you then? Separate from life?

What is it other than life? Well, I, that's life. But you don't have it, you are it.

Only the mind tells you that you have it. Insane. But normal, normal and insane.

One more, he who stands on tiptoe doesn't stand firm. He who rushes ahead doesn't go far. He who tries to shine dims his own light.

He who defines himself can't know who he really is. He who has power over others can't empower himself. He who clings to his work will create nothing that endures.

If you want to accord with the Tao, just do your job, then let go. He who stands on tiptoe doesn't stand firm. Look at me, me, my life.

Unhappy or look how miserable I am. Look how great I am. He who rushes ahead doesn't go far.

Always looking to the next thing. What do I have to do now? Always grasping for the next, or the next, what's the next thought that I need to worry about?

And the next thing rushes, entire civilization stressed, stressed out. All disconnected from the Tao. They're all rushing ahead.

No time for anything else. No time, no time. He who rushes ahead doesn't go far.

You don't really reach anywhere. He who tries to shine dims his own light. By trying to play roles or identifying with yourself as special, look at me, you cut yourself off from the power of the Tao.

It's by not directing attention to yourself, the power comes through you. Not identifying with anything, anything that you do because you don't do it. If it's a pity in a way that I wish sometimes, it's a little joke.

I wish I had written The Power of Now when I still had a big ego because now the ego would feel so great. Me, me. But then of course, The Power of Now couldn't have come through the ego.

And here, important, he who defines himself can't know who he really is. This is what we were talking about, this constant definitions of who you are in your mind. Why not just be the consciousness, be the presence right now?

That's where the power is. What a wonderful teaching, timeless. It helps, of course, to have a translation that makes it more accessible by somebody who is deeply in tune with that state of consciousness.

Traditionally, the Tao Te Ching has been always translated by academics who had a wonderful knowledge and command of ancient Chinese but absolutely no idea of the spiritual dimension. The alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, stillness, we started with it, we end with it, moment of stillness. Well, I think it was Oprah who once said, silence doesn't look good on camera.

So we can always edit it out if necessary but Oprah tried it for a minute and that seemed to work. Usually the belief is that you can't have silence on a TV screen, at least not these days. When I was a child, there actually was silence.

Well, there were only two channels and often in between programs, you would just see an image and sometimes some background music, image of a building or city. Or it said, we'll be back soon. And so the TV wouldn't draw you into continuous, what comes next, one exciting image after another, each one lasting just a few seconds as it does these days but you could actually be still and look at the TV screen and so perhaps here's another opportunity for doing that and as you look at the stillness, become still inside, tune into the stillness.

The most precious thing there is, your deepest identity is stillness. If that gets covered up, then you don't really know who you are anymore and then you look for yourself in all kinds of things without ever finding yourself until you regain what had always been there covered up by the noise, the stillness. Stillness is very patient.

Stillness is space, inner space and it's as tolerant as outer space. It allows everything to be and it cannot be touched by anything, cannot be spoiled, only covered up. So every

human being, that's the amazing thing, has that dimension within, no matter how insane they seem to be on the surface.

Becoming comfortable with stillness also means becoming comfortable with yourself, the rare state for many human beings and then you're able to be somewhere in your room, at home or outside in nature, wherever, without needing some kind of additional stimulus in your life, either some kind of excitement, nothing wrong with excitement, but you don't need it to give you a sense of aliveness anymore because the aliveness comes from a deeper place than any excitement could ever come from and then you don't need drama to give you a sense that you're still alive. That's another form of excitement and you don't need to desensitize yourself to mental or emotional pain that is there when you're not in touch with that dimension within and it's so close.

It's just, there's a mental noise or the emotional wave movement and underneath it, the sea or the lake is still. The deeper you go, the stiller it is. Now, most people can only go there when they go to sleep, so they go to a wonderful place but don't really know that they're there.

They just derive life energy from it. They wake up again and perhaps if they're lucky, say, I had a good night's sleep. I feel so good.

I don't know if you have ever done this consciously and that is, well, we all have experienced being tired and some people regard that as a negative thing but being tired, if you can bring some consciousness into being tired when you are tired, very tired. I'm not hypnotizing you. I hope nobody's going to sleep.

And your eyes are getting heavier and heavier. When you are very tired, what people call tired, what is that actually? What does it feel like?

What is that? So if you can put some attention into be alert, this is almost a paradox, have some awareness to investigate what does it actually mean and what does it actually feel like to be very tired? It feels like something from somewhere is pulling you and it almost says, come this way.

It's like a magnetic pull. And the pull is very sweet. The pull is to a place of such wonderful sweetness and rest and peace that it becomes irresistible.

And then people say, I can't keep my eyes open anymore. I'm going to, but really what that is is something is pulling you away from this world and it's so precious. And this is why when you finally go into bed and close your eyes and for the brief time span, when you're very tired, that you're still conscious, it's deeply, extremely enjoyable.

We all experience how nice it is when you're very tired and finally you lie down. All your problems are gone, forgotten. You can't, there's no energy left to think about your problems.

And so you're just moving towards that beautiful place and then you disappear in it. And it's, the pull is so powerful that even people who, there have been stories about people who were lost in the wilderness or lost out in the cold and snow and they got more and more tired. And finally, although they knew if I lie down and close my eyes and go to sleep, I'm not going to wake up again, they did it anyway because the pull became so irresistible and the beauty and sweetness of going into sleep, so overpowering that they gave in and there was no fear.

There was no fear of death, they knew they were going to die but in that moment, there was no fear of death anymore. There was just being pulled, giving in to that enormous pull. So that's the strange thing then for humans and other life forms on this planet is that every day or every night, they drop unconscious.

The entire population of the planet, half their lives they spend in gone. It could be a science fiction story, you visit a planet and then suddenly the whole population drops, becomes unconscious and it's normal. And it's called planet Earth.

So there's a, really where you're moving to the source, every human being and every life form that experiences sleep returns to the source, the unmanifested source and then comes back into the manifested, recharged but it's an unconscious return movement. It does not free you from suffering in this world of the outer world of manifestation when you come back to it. The spiritual path is about finding that realm without losing yourself in it, realizing your essential identity with it and remain conscious.

And that happens, for example, if you stop thinking without falling asleep. At first, you may not notice the same overpowering sweetness of being that you have that pulls you towards sleep. It's very subtle.

At first, there seems to be a kind of blank, empty space but there's enormous power there to the mind that looks like nothing and that's why it's sometimes described as nothing or no thing or emptiness because the mind is used to noise. It's not really capable of grasping that. It cannot be grasped.

I sometimes compare it to stepping after you're spending several hours in a noisy discotheque which is a metaphor here for normal existence. You step out, close the door behind you and you find yourself, it's the middle of the night and you're out in nature somewhere. There are very subtle sounds and there's an all-pervasive silence, an alive silence around you but because you're deafened by the noise, you cannot yet, it's too subtle for you to then perceive that.

So at first, you go into place, it seems, oh, there's nothing here. So it's gradually you become attuned to the inner stillness and realize its depth and its sweetness and its aliveness. I brought with me today a book.

We're just going to look at a few lines from that ancient book. This is our second session. We had at some previous point, we already had a session on the ancient Chinese book of wisdom, the Tao Te Ching and this is our second session on the Tao Te Ching and something important to remember is we are not really studying a book.

We are using the words of that book to look at our essential reality. We are not studying something outside ourselves and that applies whenever you read any book that is spiritually, vitally alive. You're not studying, it's not an academic subject.

You're not studying a book. You're not absorbing information outside of yourself. You are, if it's a spiritual, true spiritual book, the book is about you.

Every true spiritual book is about the most essential dimension of who you are. Rediscovering it, finding it, living from that dimension, that's what any spiritual book is about and so somebody even called the Tao Te Ching that was written 2,500 years ago, the world's first self-help book. Sometimes these days, people speak dismissively about self-help books and perhaps the reason is because there are so many and there's such varying quality and depth and inevitably, there are always more self-help books or books of any kind that are not so powerful and not so deep and relatively few that actually are vitally alive because they were written from that place within the author, which ultimately means they were written by consciousness itself. So there are always more false diamonds than real diamonds, of course.

Some and some books are mixed back, that you have some beautiful insides and a lot of fluff in between. That's fine too. It's sometimes worth reading a book just for the two pages.

If you could summarize all the insights in some books, you could get it down to two pages and that could change somebody's life and that's fine. If they had to read another 150 pages in the process, fine, at least they got that. But then you have some books that are almost undiluted wisdom.

What elsewhere is dispersed throughout a book. Sometimes you get it in literature. You get deep insights occasionally.

Every 30 pages, you get one sentence that stands out as wow. And so there are some books, however, that are the cream instead of skimmed milk. And those are the books that are eternal, well, not eternal, but relatively speaking, they survive for a very long time and they are beyond the particular culture out of which they came.

Otherwise, how could a book written 2,500 years ago in China speak to us now? It's like something coming from a different planet, from a different galaxy. But since it touches the deepest dimension of human existence, its essence is timeless.

And that's why it's still alive and that's why it's still read these days and valued,

appreciated, and is helpful for many, many people. An amazing thing for a book to survive that long. One miracle is that even its physical form survived for that long.

And then to survive, to be still not just of interest to some historians, but of vital significance to a human being, amazing. Miraculous thing, 2,500 years ago. And of course, the same thing applies to the teaching of the Buddha, for example, which is still as vitally true and alive as it was about the same time, 2,500, 2,600 years ago.

The author of the Tao Te Ching is Lao Tse, who lived about the same time, give or take 100 years, which isn't much, as the Buddha in India. Lao Tse lived in China. The Buddha lived in India, as I pointed out already at some stage.

So at that time, just a brief recapitulation, there was an enormous wave movement of spiritual awakening, not as all-pervasive and powerful as it is now, but for that time, it was an incredible thing. When at the same time period, teachers arose in different parts of the planet and teachings, and many people, relatively few, but still, people responded to that. There was the Buddha in India.

There was Mahavira in India. There was Zoroaster in Persia. There were the ancient Greek pre-Socratic philosophers, very deep insights in ancient Greece, all at the same time.

All happened virtually simultaneously. And so this book, then, Tao Te Ching survived, and miraculously, of course, it has to get translated. How do you get that across from ancient Chinese symbols?

How do you, and there are about 100, translations into English available now. And sometimes you compare translations, and you see, are they translating the same book? Is that the same text?

So for the translator itself, now this is another important point. It's not only that the book, to be spiritually, vitally alive, needs to come from the deepest place. When a book like that gets translated, even the translator needs to be attuned to the essential message of the book.

And so many translations have been done of the Tao Te Ching, and all the translations that were done initially were done by academics at universities. They had great knowledge of Chinese language, but no attunement at all to the essential teaching. And so you got many mistranslations of that, and only recently, relatively recently, people came in who translated, who had both knowledge of Chinese, and most importantly, inner attunement to the essential message of that.

Tao Te Ching, a strange title, not to be confused, by the way, with the I Ching, which is another book, also Chinese, also interesting, but this is the Tao Te Ching. Tao has never been really successfully translated. It doesn't lend itself to that.

You need to keep that in Chinese, but even if you're Chinese, you won't be any wiser as to the meaning of Tao. So even Chinese people don't have that advantage. When you talk of Tao, their mouth opens, and you ask them, what does that really mean?

They go, oh, when I first heard of the Tao Te Ching and read it, that was a few years after a shift in consciousness. Immediately, I said, wow, yes, wow, wow. And then I asked my next-door neighbor at college, graduate school.

He was Chinese, student of mathematics. I wanted to talk to him about the Tao Te Ching, and he said, what? Never heard of it.

Just very briefly, the Tao has also different shades of meaning, dimensions of meaning. On the one hand, the Tao is the is-ness of all things. Tao is the suchness, the is-ness of this moment as it is.

That's the Tao in its manifested aspect. The Tao is also the source, the unmanifested source out of which the is-ness of all things emerges. So it's manifold meaning.

The Te, again, traditionally, that word Te is traditionally translated as virtue, which is not really a good thing anymore since virtue is a relatively dead word. When was the last time you said virtue? Really, the Te refers to the flow.

Anybody who is in tune with the Tao is an expression of Te, which is right action, right living. Ethics comes into it, but in the sense of virtue, but it's not something that needs to be learned externally, something that naturally comes from the source of life. When you're in tune with the Tao, the source of life, then all your actions and your speech are virtuous, which really means charged with the power of the Tao.

So Te really is power, the power of the Tao, the intelligence, the intelligent power of the Tao. When you're in tune with that, you don't need to think about ethics anymore because then that flows naturally from the core of your being. In that sense, you can say virtue, but the closer translation actually would be power.

And if the book didn't already exist, a good translation for Tao Te Ching, I think, would be the power of now. Because Tao is inseparable from the present moment. There is, Tao only is timeless presence.

There is no past or future in Tao. Let's look at a few lines. The translation, I have two translations here.

One that I like very much, or version, Stephen Mitchell's version, and another version is by Jane English and Jia Fu Feng. They translated it together. But you may have others that are your favorites.

You have to look around, whatever you respond to. Now, Stephen Mitchell, fortunately,

does not exclusively use the masculine pronoun as it's done in most other translations. He, the master, he varies between she and he.

So sometimes the master is seen as feminine and sometimes the master is seen as masculine, which is a wonderful thing, since the Tao has many qualities that are closely related to the feminine, the openness and so on. There are many images in the Tao Te Ching that are feminine images to point to the essential nature of the Tao. Not that the Tao itself is feminine, but to get a feeling for what Tao is, the Tao Te Ching uses feminine imagery.

So here we have a little few lines about the master. The master keeps her mind always at one with the Tao. That is what gives her her radiance.

The Tao is ungraspable. How can her mind be at one with it? Because she doesn't cling to ideas.

The Tao is dark and unfathomable. How can it make her radiant? Because she lets it.

Since before time and space where the Tao is. It is beyond is and is not. How do I know this is true?

I look inside myself and see. Let's look at it again and see. The master keeps her mind always at one with the Tao.

That is what gives her her radiance. Keeps her mind at one with the Tao. In the next line it says, if it's ungraspable, how can her mind be at one with it?

And it says because she doesn't cling to ideas. Interesting. She doesn't cling to ideas.

That reminds me of the famous Zen saying. I don't remember who said it, but Zen master said it. Don't seek for the truth.

Just cease or stop cherishing opinions. That is, I believe, points to the same inner state of disidentification from thinking. Thinking.

She doesn't cling to ideas. Cling to, it doesn't mean she doesn't have ideas, the master, but the master does not cling to ideas. And the Zen master, when he said, don't look for the truth, just stop cherishing opinions.

Opinions. He didn't say, stop having opinions. Just as Lao Tzu does not say, don't have ideas.

Says, don't cling to ideas. And the other master says, stop cherishing opinions. So this clinging, which is the same as cherishing, is self-identification with thoughts that arise.

In other words, you then believe completely in every thought that comes into your head.

Amazing. You believe in it, that means you are it.

And that is self-identification with thinking. So how then to be at one, always at one with the Tao? So simple.

On the one hand, you could call it, stop cherishing opinions. Now, any thought that arises ultimately is an opinion, you could say. Stop cherishing, stop your self-identification with that.

Or don't cling to ideas, in the words of Lao Tzu, or this present translation here, so that there's always a space between you and your thoughts. Or rather, you are not the thought, you are the space for the thought. This is how I put it sometimes.

You're familiar with that. And perhaps in yourself, you know it. You don't have to be in your thoughts, but you can be the space for your thoughts.

Then no matter how weird your thoughts are, it doesn't matter that much. You don't say, oh my God, I shouldn't be having these weird thoughts. No, because that's another thought.

I'm supposed to be spiritually advanced, and why am I still having these thoughts? There must be something wrong with me. Does that sound familiar?

That's also thoughts. That's more thoughts that say, I shouldn't be having these thoughts, there's something wrong with me. And then you believe in those thoughts.

Thoughts that judge other thoughts. That may sound familiar to some of you, and there's nothing personal in it, it's the human mind. So you don't need to eliminate thoughts or to say, I should only have pure thoughts because I'm a spiritual person.

Because by now, I should have transcended all impure thoughts. Well, then you're in a dilemma because in this world of polarities, if you only want to have pure thoughts, you're creating the other polarity in the unseen. And sooner or later, the other polarity will come up from behind, creep up.

And this has been done sometimes by Christians who try to practice the teachings of Christ without entering the state of consciousness out of which that comes. So they try to be pure and spiritual and good Christians and denied the other polarity, repressed it. And then suddenly they get overpowered by something deeply destructive and negative.

So you have these occasion, you have a nice, wonderful person who always talks in spiritual, just so gentle spiritual. And before you know it, he's screaming at his wife or even hitting his wife. Whoa, where did that come from?

And he can't even admit to himself that this is what's happening. So if you push away certain thoughts because they do not fit into the mental image of who you are as this or

that, then they assume a life of their own. And before you know it, they invade your mind again, if only in your dreams.

And suddenly you have dreadful nightmares. During a day, you're such a spiritual person. And at night, you suddenly have dreadful nightmares.

Monsters come or you become a monster. Oh my God, this shouldn't be happening. And that's because you're pushing something away.

The true spiritual does not lie in one thought or another thought. It lies in being there as the space for your thoughts. Then it doesn't matter anymore, really.

Whatever thought arises is no more than that. It's a form that arises at this moment. You don't resist it.

You don't need to resist it. But you are the space for it. You don't become it.

Somebody sent me a sticker to put on the car. I haven't put it on my car yet. A very wise sticker.

I don't know where it originated. It says, you don't need to believe every thought you think. So this is the practice then of being the space or the witness for your thoughts rather than being the thought.

And you can practice with your opinions. Many thoughts are actual, most thoughts can, all thoughts could be called opinions, but there are certain things that are definitely, clearly recognizable as opinions when you are talking to people every day, when you're having a discussion or talk with friends or colleagues or neighbors. So they will express their opinion, whatever it may be about, and you may express your opinion.

And you can then observe whether or not there is self-identification with your opinion. And your opinion, of course, is a mental position, the position of the mind. Are you identified with a mental position?

If you are, then you are cherishing opinions in the words of the Zen master, or you are clinging to ideas in the words of Lao Tse. And how do you know that? You know that when, as you discuss things, you become either defensive or aggressive in the expression of your opinion.

Emotion flows into, and you get worked up in, huh, why is that happening? Why are you becoming defensive or aggressive? And of course, you have to look inside yourself to see whether this is the case or not.

Are you becoming defensive or aggressive? You feel the influx of emotion. And why is this happening?

Because unconsciously, you feel threatened by somebody who attacks or questions or contradicts your mental position. Why do you feel threatened by somebody who questions your mental position? That is a sign that you had identified with a mental position.

And identified means your sense of self was in it. So the person is not attacking your opinion in your unconscious viewpoint. The person you're being attacked in your very, a life is being, is under attack because you identified this.

This is not true, but this is how it is perceived, as if they were attacking your very existence because you identified with a mental position. There was a self in it. So anybody who questions it questions your very existence.

It's unconscious process. So that's an amazing thing to realize in yourself. And it's a deep seated unconscious pattern in most human beings.

And of course, as you become conscious of that, you can usually see it much more clearly in others, more easily in your friend or whoever you're having, then in yourself. Usually says, oh, yes, that's what he always does. Of course, now I understand what my husband or my wife does.

I understand completely. That's step one. And that's why I was so happy when I heard Obama say, you don't have to be disagreeable when you disagree with someone.

What that really implies is, because if you do become disagreeable and you disagree with someone, you're identified with a mental position. So you can express, you don't have to relinquish all opinions or mental positions, no. But is that who you are?

Or is that something in you as a mind movement? Enormous difference. And if you can have a discussion between people who are not identified with their respective viewpoints, it's a wonderful thing.

It's quite beautiful. An exchange of ideas. But nobody is identified with their ideas.

And that's a conscious discussion, a conscious group of people. We call them then conscious, as opposed to unconscious people who are identified, because that's the difference in spiritual terms between conscious and unconscious. Conscious means non-identification with form.

That's what conscious is. And primarily, forms appear as thought forms. Those are the primary forms.

That's where you experience life, the life of form in yourself as arising thoughts. So occasionally one is able to witness that and it's always beautiful. Then a discussion is actually a beautiful thing.

Whereas normally in the old unconscious state, but as soon as people start discussing something, I feel the strong impulse to leave the room in the unconscious state. Or you can also try to be there as the one conscious presence while the others identified. Or it may be possible to pull the entire group into consciousness.

It may be, but depends how overwhelming the force of the unconsciousness is in the room and in the people. So either you stay there as the conscious presence in the room, and then you might say something from not against anything or anybody, just put forward your opinion. That might change the vibrational frequency in the room or you may have to remove yourself because ultimately it's insane and nothing good comes of it if each person is identified with their mental position.

Nothing will come of it. Perhaps some kind of compromise, if you're lucky, some kind of compromise that everybody dislikes. So to be at one with the Tao, with the source of life, so that the primordial intelligence can operate through you, you don't have to look for it.

Where's the, how can I connect with the primordial intelligence? He, Eckhart was talking about primordial intelligence. Well, it's already there.

Rather than looking for it as something, just stop doing certain things that block it. And then naturally it's there. So you can also, you don't have to find your true self.

That would be quite hard. Yeah, I'm looking for myself. Because how could you not be your, if it's your true self, how could you not already be it?

So it's just stop obscuring your true self if you want to use that expression. So the vital, a very vital practice then for everyone is stop identifying with thoughts. And that requires an alertness as you go about your life, especially when engaged with, in conversation with other people, but also in the continuous self-talk that goes on and on in most people's minds.

There also it is vital that you are not totally identified with the arising self-talk. And it's a very strange thing, that self-talk, that you have to look at your own self. Do you have one voice that says I in your head?

I, I'm this, I'm that. Or do you have a voice that addresses you as you? It varies from person to person.

What kind of self-talk do you have? Is there some self-talk that is predominantly negative? Is there self-talk that is very critical of yourself a lot of the time?

Is there self-talk that is very critical of others a lot of the time? Is there self-talk that is critical of situations? Is there self-talk that's critical of places where you are?

Or self-talk is critical about what you are doing, but really don't want to be doing. You

just have to do it now. But really, as the sticker on the car says, I'd rather be fishing, or I'd rather be surfing, not driving.

Look at the kind of self-habitual self-talk, or do you have two voices that argue with each other? Why can't you ever do the right thing? Well, I'm doing my best, but...

All that is an amazing thing, that the voice in the head. I say the voice in the head, and of course, for many people, it's the voices in the head. What I just mentioned, I believe there was a psychologist who identified those two voices as the top dog and the underdog.

The top dog says, you're no good, why can't you do that? And the underdog says, oh, well, I'm trying so hard. And of course, which is the true one?

Are you truly the top dog, or you're neither? So you are the space for those thoughts. So all these things are really the vital spiritual practice is for you to become the awareness underneath your thoughts, the awareness around your thoughts so that you're no longer totally controlled by, and your life is not controlled by, the thoughts that arise that say this or that.

And then you don't feel good, this is a little superficial, and say, okay, I must think positive thoughts, otherwise I won't feel good. I'm really better off than most people on the planet. I have to remind myself that I'm actually, that most people are worse off than me.

Just think about that to make myself feel a little better. Okay, I have to think about all the poor people who are in this place, and then I can feel better about myself. The true sense of aliveness doesn't come through the medium of thought, it comes from a more vital place within.

It comes from the awareness itself or the consciousness itself. So the shift then is you step back from your thoughts and look at them and say, oh, the thought. Occasionally, sometimes Buddhists, they practice mindfulness, which is closely related to this, which is becoming aware of whatever your mind does.

I don't think the word mindfulness is such a wonderful translation because it sounds as if your mind were full. But we know what they mean. So it's awareness practice so that you are not your thoughts.

And then naturally you feel a deeper sense of aliveness and connectedness. And spaces, when you're not identified anymore with every thought, then you have spaces in between the thoughts where there's no thought but simply a conscious presence. And that is the Tao, and that is who you are.

And that has no form. And you couldn't say anything much about it, not really. It is

ungraspable.

The Tao is ungraspable. And this is a pitfall of many spiritual seekers. They're looking for something to grasp, some kind of experience or some kind of realization, thunder and lightning experience, looking for something as if, or looking for God, as if God could be found as an object in consciousness.

And that's why the Zen master said, don't look for the truth. We could all say, don't look for God, don't look for yourself, just step out of the mind. Be the space.

The Tao is dark and unfathomable. How can it make her radiant? Because she lets it.

She doesn't need to understand it. It cannot be understood. In fact, in that becoming conscious, understanding plays a very insignificant role, if at all.

Perhaps understanding, the main part of understanding is understanding the obstacles to it, but not it. So again, many spiritual seekers think they need to arrive at some greater or deeper understanding of reality or of God or whatever, or of who they are. No, it's not.

The realization does not arise from increased understanding. And that's almost insulting to the human mind which says, well, why then have I been studying all these books for 25 years? Well, at least you're here now and realize that that's not the way.

So she lets it. The Tao is dark and unfathomable. This implies you cannot understand it because the moment you understand it, it's no longer unfathomable.

You say, oh, now I've got it. You can never say, now I've got it. If you say, now I've got it, you haven't got it.

How can it make her radiant? Radiant means when you are connected with that, the power flows through you. The radiance comes through.

And so she lets it. She doesn't understand it, but she is attuned with it. So in the Course in Miracles too, it says, you still think that your understanding is a great contribution to the truth, but that is actually not the case.

I don't know what the second part of that statement is, but basically it's your understanding is not an important contribution to the truth. Now, what is the case, however, is that when you are in tune with the Tao, if there is anything here in this world that you need to understand, you will understand it. You don't understand the essence.

You cannot understand that. You can't understand God. You can't understand consciousness.

You can only be consciousness. You can be conscious, in conscious connection with the

consciousness, but you can't understand it. This is why I cannot answer questions when people ask me, can you please define what consciousness is?

No, I can't, nor can you. But you are it. You can be it.

You can realize that you are it. Then out of that realization, minor understandings arise as whatever in any situation that you find yourself in, the intelligence operates through you and suddenly you know what is right for this situation. In that sense, understanding comes out of it, but the understanding comes out of the prior position of non-understanding.

The most basic not knowing is vital because it is a state of not thinking. It doesn't come out of your own thinking. You embrace the spaciousness of not thinking.

And then understanding in a limited sense comes out of that, but not understanding of the deepest, that deepest unmanifested, uncreated dimension. Since before time and space were, the Tao is, is and Tao is one. It's just is in it, no past, no was, no will be.

It is beyond is and is not. What does that mean? It is beyond is and is not.

Beyond existence, what exists or does not exist. There's existence, which is the all forms of life exist. The vaster dimension, what I call being or what is the Tao is the unmanifested out of which all existence comes.

Existence comes from Latin. It means to stand out. X means out.

So, and existence means a form, but underneath and within each form, there is the formless essence of all life, the Tao. Underneath it, so to speak, all language is very limited because language comes from this world of up, down, left, right, and so on. Underneath it, there is the unmanifested, the being, and then there's the existence.

All existence comes out of being and is essentially being, expressing itself in form. So you yourself have the two aspects. You exist as a physical and psychological form temporarily, and in your innermost, there is the timeless dimension of being that frees you from being totally caught up in the temporal existence, which is a dreadful thing.

How do I know this is true? I look inside myself and see. The ultimate truth of the universe is within you.

You find the ultimate within you. Wherever you go, it will still apply. I'll read the first line of another verse, just the first line for the moment.

Verse 20, I mean a poem. I don't know if you call them poems. Chapter 20, stop thinking and end your problems.

Stop thinking and end your problems. All problems are generated by thinking. How do I

know this is true?

The famous test that I've many times mentioned to people, and I recommend that you, if you still need it, that you write it on a little card and put it on your bathroom mirror or wherever else you tend to look quite often. And I'm not talking about affirmations such as I love myself. Well, that's fine too.

It's better than hating yourself, but it's still within the polarities. No, what I mean is to write something a little like, what's the problem now? What's the problem now?

If you think you have lots of problems in order to touch reality, because problems are generated by continuous thinking. It's not to do with right now, no. The problems exist in the mind in the future or the imaginary situation that's going to arise perhaps in the future.

Maybe it will arise, maybe it won't. But usually the imagined situations are far worse than the actual situations when they happen. So what's the problem now?

What happens when you look at that phrase? What's the problem now? Your attention then goes from being absorbed in, okay, oh my God, what's going to happen, to now, okay, is that a problem now?

And then you have to wake up into now to answer the question on this little card. What's the problem now? You have to actually wake up into the now because you never know there might be a problem now.

You have to focus attention and look. And so suddenly your attention moves into the present moment. And there you stand in front of your bathroom mirror and look, okay, what's the problem now?

I don't know. You look, well, then the mind says, oh, you're looking old. It looks in the mirror.

That's the problem. No, of course it's not a problem. It's a thought that arises.

And usually the mind has, of course, more complicated things to say, but then you realize that at this moment, it's not actually a problem. But the mind says, yes, but it will become a problem in the next moment. But of course, when the next moment comes, it comes again as this moment, and then you have to ask a question again.

What is the problem now? And the amazing realization will come to you that there never is a problem now. Only a situation.

You can deal with it or leave it alone for the time being. It's never a problem. Some situations demand immediate action.

And then, of course, it's not a problem. There's no time for it to become a problem. If it demands immediate action, you look and you act.

Other things you may have to think about, you might occasionally have to think, okay, what are the possible solutions to this situation? And what you do then is to apply focused thinking, but before you do that, you become still, present. And then you, out of that, then it comes, okay, what are the possibilities in this situation?

I could pick up the phone and make a phone call to that person. I can look, go to that place and ask for help. I can go there too, and I can do that.

One, two, three, four, five, write it down, put it aside, okay. And then, which one of these can I do now? And then you do it.

It's never, it's not a problem. If I juggle ideas, thoughts in my mind uselessly, that's a problem. What if, what if?

Attention back to now. What's the problem now? And so it's always amazing to realize that the now is free of problems because you're breathing, you're perceiving your senses, you feel the aliveness in the body.

More than enough to deal with any situation that may arise or may be there. Of course, that's why people love dangerous activities. Some people get addicted to danger because it stops their mind and they have no problems while they're climbing up the mountain.

They're totally present. So for a little while, they can't, you can't carry your problems up the mountain wall if you're climbing up a sheer wall of a mountain. If you carry your problems with you, you're going to fall off.

So you have to leave your problems and be totally present. And so that's why it is so, you feel so much more alive there because the mind, the parasite that otherwise sucks up your energy is not active at that time. Or you go surfing, you can't think about, I wonder how high this, you just, you look and you do, or you look and you don't do, or you fall in, it's all fine, there's no thinking.

You can't think, you're not going to go be very good at it if you're thinking. Stop thinking and end your problems. What difference between yes and no?

What difference between success and failure? Must you value what others value? Avoid what others avoid?

How ridiculous. What difference, it says, between success and failure? What is meant by that is that success and failure are mental labels that you attach.

And so the master, she does not live, or he does not live according to these mental

labels where you go, wow, I am so good at this. I am so successful, and then attach yourself to that idea because it may turn into the opposite. Or you don't describe yourself as a failure or a success because both are ways of identifying with a form in your mind.

I am a great success. I am the best-selling author. Okay, what if three years from now, nobody buys the book anymore?

What happens to my sense of identity then? Well, I can still then cling to and then just say, I once was a best-selling author. So deriving your identity from a conceptual sense of self, and very often success or failure is part of one's conceptual sense of self, and it gives you your sense of who you are.

It's a very limited sense of who you are. Now, if you, a conceptual identity, either as a successful person, and of course there's always a fear that it may not last, and of course it probably won't because nothing lasts forever. So successful person, precarious conceptual sense of self, and continuously you'll find the more successful you are, the more things come in that the conceptual image is being attacked.

They're beginning to write about you in People magazine, or they're beginning to, People is still quite benign, but there are other magazines that will tear you to pieces. And so you have to, your conceptual sense is very shaky concept if your identity is derived from myself as the one who is successful. When many people want that, there's nothing wrong with achieving.

The question is whether you need that to give you an enhanced identity, or whether you simply enjoy the play of form in this world, and you contribute, but there's no self-identification in a conceptual way, and that is great freedom. Identity, then failure, another very strong sense of identity for people, another conceptual identity of thinking of yourself as somebody who has failed at something. My life has been a failure.

It's too late now. I've made so many mistakes. I've married the wrong person.

I chose the wrong career. I tried, but it didn't work out. The world didn't recognize my talents.

I never had a real chance. Life never gave me a chance. If only my parents had taught me at an early age, if only they had not, if only the system wasn't so, if only then perhaps, but it's too late now.

That's a heavy sense of self. It's a conceptual identity that is as heavy or heavier than the person who thinks I've made it in the world. Everybody, I'm the great one who has achieved wealth, fame, and so on.

They are both heavy, but I say perhaps the miserable one is even heavier. And of course,

I'm giving you these two extremes which do exist in certain people. For many people, there's a movement, they fluctuate between these two of thinking of yourself as, oh, actually not bad, quite good.

I'm actually still better looking than most. Or, if that's your conceptual identity, or I still have more money than most of my friends or neighbors, okay? Or then you shift into, oh, I'm losing.

I'm losing it, I'm losing out. The others are overtaking me. People I was at school with, they're already there, and I'm still here.

Oh, dear. So, again, so here we have, where does your sense of self come from? The conceptual, the concepts in your mind, or does it come not from any kind of thought, but from that which is deeper than thought, the stillness, the depths, the presence that you are?

And that's the liberation. It's when your sense of who you are comes out of the presence of who you are, in essence, which is the consciousness that you are. And then it doesn't, it is secondary.

I sometimes say it is no longer of absolute importance then what your life situation is. Once you know who you are, and you can only know it in this moment, you can't say, okay, now I know it, what's next? No, once you know who you are in this now, the only place where you can know who you are, your life situation is only of relative importance.

It's still relatively important, the way I put it, whether you are poor or wealthy, well, it does make some difference in your life, yes, true. It's of relative importance whether you are healthy or the body is not doing very well, of course, it's relative importance. Whether you have satisfying relationships is important.

Whether you have a nice place to live or an unpleasant place to live, yes, of course, it's important, but it is not of absolute importance anymore. It is of relative, everything in your life situation then is of relative importance because only the one thing, there's only the one thing that matters absolutely, and that is knowing who you are beyond all the forms, knowing yourself as the presence underneath it all. And then you can live with any life situation and be at peace with it and still deal with it and still be active, but to be at peace with whatever the situation is at the moment, you are deeper than that, you are beyond that.

You are the consciousness, you are not ultimately the person who is having a life situation. The person who has a place where he or she lives, which may be good or not so good. The person who has relationships, the person who has money or no money.

Yes, these things matter, but they don't matter absolutely. If they matter absolutely, it means you don't know the absolute. Then they matter absolutely and they have the

power to make you miserable, the things of this world.

Even success can make you then miserable as it's often the case. There are as many people made miserable by failure as people made miserable by success. So, who am I?

We had, at some point we talked about that as a meditation. Method, so to speak, the simplest meditation method to ask, who am I? And of course, that is the most vital question.

And none, whatever concepts are rising in your mind about who you are are not who you are. So the wonderful liberation is to go beyond a conceptual sense of self. And this is not only liberating to yourself, so to speak, but you liberate other people from imposing on them also a conceptual sense of self.

This is a dreadful thing to do to other human beings because you no longer recognize the essential aliveness and your essential oneness with that so-called other human being. You no longer recognize that. To you then, the other being, human being, becomes reduced to a concept in your head.

And so you have a set of beliefs about who that other human being is. And why are you doing that to another human being? Because before, you did it to yourself and you continuously do it to yourself.

Then you cannot not do it to another human being, imposing a conceptual identity onto others. And so that's the, an enormous improvement that then happens in relationships when you do not come from a conceptual sense of self and therefore no longer impose a conceptual sense of self on others. A set of judgments, a set of criticisms of who they are.

What's such a normal thing to do? It doesn't mean you can't, you don't see certain behavior patterns in another human being. It may well be that you see that the person who knocks on your door and wants to sell you something, what he's trying to sell you is a fake and he's trying to tell you that it is genuine, so you're not going to say in your mind, okay, I must not believe that he's an honest person.

No, you don't have to believe anything. And here comes something in that there's a knowing for which you don't need concepts. You can know if a person tries to deceive you, you know it without having to call him a thief or a manipulator.

You see it and that's all. You see what behavior pattern governs this person and then you also see there is something deeper than that behavior pattern. You don't react as if that behavior pattern were the ultimate reality of that human being.

And that's a wonderful thing that you can do for another human being is not to act as if the behavior they manifest were their ultimate reality, because it isn't. And sometimes

the miracle happens that you can free without consciously doing it, not thinking that I'm going to free you, but by being in that state of consciousness, you can free, sometimes it happens, you can free a person from their limited, unconscious behavior patterns because you are not acknowledging it. You see it, but you don't acknowledge it.

If you acknowledge it, if you impose judgments, you reduce the human being to something that is not, but by doing it to another, you do it to yourself. And this is perhaps why Jesus said, judge not so that you are not judged, because you're really, you're judging always yourself. And so in the Course in Miracles, there's a beautiful line.

That was the first line I ever heard about a Course in Miracles when it came to England in the, in 1980 something. I was, I saw this strange thing. People said, Course in Miracles said, oh no, another weird thing has come from California.

And of course it turned out it wasn't from California. It came from New York, but was actually written at Columbia University. Would you believe that?

And this person, I asked the person, have you ever heard of this weird thing called a Course in Miracles? And the person said, I don't know much about it except one sentence. And that is, what you perceive in another, you strengthen in yourself.

So perceive here means what you focus on in the other. The very, if you focus on the other is dishonest, if the other is unconscious in some behavior in the other, you, what you focus on, you strengthen in yourself. If that becomes your reality, it draws you into the same.

So here, freedom then comes from not imposing conceptual identities on others, which you can only do if you no longer impose or believe in or derive your identity from conceptual sense of self in your own mind. And so you end up, of course, with something that the ego does not particularly like, because the opinions that you have about yourself are becoming quite insubstantial or weak. In other words, you're beginning to have fewer and fewer opinions about who you are.

That's being attuned with the Tao. And so when then people ask you about how do you see yourself, as I have occasionally once or twice have been asked by people who came to interview me, so how do you see yourself?

[Speaker 8] (6:08:04 - 6:08:05)

Well, I don't know.

[Speaker 1] (6:08:05 - 6:14:51)

No. Not in any particular way. I gave very unsatisfying answers to these questions.

I don't know how, I don't see myself. If I saw myself as a great spiritual teacher, that

would be the beginning of delusion, because it would be the beginning of identification with a form identity. If I saw myself as a successful author now and derived some satisfaction from it, yes, it's fulfilling to know that many people are being helped, this is wonderful, but I didn't do that as such.

It happened through this form. I would have been very unhappy for many years when my conceptual reality was one of, if I had had one, my mother had it for me, of being unsuccessful in this world, a failure. A person who's made so many mistakes that now it's too late for everything.

So that would have been, for 20 years, I would have lived in that very painful conceptual reality. You have failed. Look at your friends from school.

They've got their big cars now. They've got their careers. What have you got to show for it?

Nothing. If I had had that, it would have been painful, but fortunately, even on the park bench already, there was no conceptual identity and the park bench was a beautiful place. It was fine.

Only others felt sorry for me and that was fine too. I remember my father, a little later, I acquired a bicycle. My father then came for a visit to London where I was living and at that time he was a businessman and he was staying in this hotel on the 10th floor and I visited him in his room and opposite the hotel was a park and there was a railings and I chained my bicycle to the railings and very proudly I said, I was about 30 or 31 then, my father, I said, look down there, there's my bike.

And he got very upset. He said, what, oh poor you, you have to go on a bike in London? That's terrible, what a terrible thing.

I never expected that response. I was, it was a nice new bike. And so deep down he felt, oh, my poor son, he failed, although not never as, never went that far in his belief as my mom did, but fortunately before she passed away, her son became successful.

I'll just read the rest of this chapter, 20. There's a little bit of humor in this chapter. Lao Tse talks about himself, but humorously, it's hidden humor.

Other people are excited as though they were at a parade. I alone don't care. I alone am expressionless, like an infant before it can smile.

Other people have what they need. I alone possess nothing. I alone drift about like someone without a home.

I'm like an idiot. My mind is so empty. Of course, that would be an external viewpoint.

There's always a certain similarity between the master who has gone beyond thinking

and the simpleton who has not yet arrived at thinking, the so-called fool. The fool is pre-thought, the master is post-thought, but they can be confused. You can confuse one with the other, which is beautifully expressed in an old film with Peter Sellers called Being There, where being the main character in that film is a very simple person who has never even arrived at ego yet, and yet because of the similarity with that state and the transcendent state, he's mistaken by everybody for the wisest person around, and even in the end of the film, put forward to become president of the United States. I am like an idiot. My mind is so empty.

Other people are bright. I alone am dark. Other people are sharp.

I alone am dull. Other people have a purpose. I alone don't know.

I drift like a wave on the ocean. I blow as aimless as the wind. I'm different from ordinary people.

I drink from the great mother's breasts. In an alternative translation, the last line is, I am nourished by the great mother. I am nourished by the great mother.

He had quite a sense of humor, I would say. There's a lot of humor in here. It's not necessarily immediately visible, but it's there.

We didn't get very much done in the Dao De Jing, but that's fine. Only two little chapters. That doesn't matter because the truth is in every line.

It's like a hologram. Any spiritual teaching, really, it doesn't go, you have to know this first for you to understand that. The truth is everywhere, in every statement, in every sentence, on every page.

[Speaker 2] (6:17:16 - 6:22:37)

I've kind of just answered this question, but it's on love and soulmates. Is there such a thing as a soulmate? And is there something we should try to find?

I have a wonderful husband of many years with grown children, but I feel like there's something missing, and I want to find my true soulmate. Is this just a fantasy? Well, I answered it.

Our soulmate is ourself. Right? It truly is.

It's that hole in that flute. And yet, sometimes a soulmate can show up that hole in the flute, you can see that reflected in another person. And they see it reflected in you, and somehow we connect together.

That's the connection. I mean, that's my connection with Eckhart. Truly, it's, wow.

It's the one person that I could truly see myself reflected, because we're all reflections. So it's nice. But if I only solely just saw in him, I would become lost in him, right?

I'd become starting to grab on and hold on, thinking like, oh, I could only get it through him, I could only see it through him. I have to see it in myself. We were in Switzerland visiting this church, just doing some sightseeing between talks.

And it was also a Christian church. But they had this old part and then the new part of the church. And here I was, I went to this old part, and they had these beautiful sort of paintings on the wall of the church.

And I stood there, and I could not move. I was suddenly experiencing like no time, where there's past, present, and future was happening all at once, all at the same time. I could see it all.

I could see the past, everything that was going on. And I stood there frozen. I was like, oh my God, this is incredible.

And then I thought, well, okay, maybe I better go, because Eckhart's waiting for me. He kind of knows me by now when I go into something. He just leaves me, which is really nice.

He'll just sit and wait for me, because he knows I sometimes go into these different experiences. So I turned around, so I turned my body around, and I looked out there. And he's the only one out there.

But I looked at the church, and I'm like, oh, I'm not ready. So I turned myself back around, and I'm like, oh, yeah, this is great. The timeless realm, this is wonderful.

And then again, I turn around, because some time passes, and I'm like, no, I'm not ready to go back out there. Then somebody else comes, and they're too frozen. They're just stuck there.

And he mentioned this. He says, you guys were just standing there like looking at the wall. You're like, what were you looking at?

You know? And then, you know, she was standing there a long time, but then she left. So I turned, and I thought, okay, I better get going, because I don't know how long.

It felt like a very long time I was standing there. So I turned around. I took a deep breath, and I walked down the two steps that I had to walk down to the new part of the church.

And I'm like, oh, God, I'm back in this realm. And then I sat down beside Eckhart, and he looked at me, and I looked at him. And I said, oh, my God, no, I'm not.

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. All I had to do was look at him, and I'm just in that timeless realm

again. And I went, oh, home.

That's home. And it's really nice to be able to find someone to reflect that back. And sometimes we can't find it.

And that's okay, because when we actually find it in ourselves and hold it, meaning maintain it in ourselves, so maintain that sort of, that feeling of, that sense of oneness, that hole in that flute, then we just see it. We look out, and we see it. It's just there.

It doesn't matter about the other person, whether they're in that realm or not. But it is really nice to meet somebody who else is in that realm. So though I consider Eckhart my soulmate, my soulmate is really that hole in the flute.

[Speaker 7] (6:22:38 - 6:22:40)

And he's just a reflection of that.

[Speaker 1] (6:23:11 - 7:32:20)

Thank you. Wonderful. Welcome.

My first time here, up north. And it is perhaps not mere coincidence, but synchronistic that we are coming together here at a time of crisis politically. And it is significant that a group of people are gathering here who are focused on spiritual awakening.

And of course, the inevitable thing that comes with spiritual awakening, that's inner peace. And that's what needed, not only here, but in the rest of the world too. So most of you are here because you're already undergoing what I call the awakening process.

And I'm sure some of you are here who are already awake and just enjoy listening to me. Don't need to be here anymore, but that's fine. And one or two may be here against their free will because your partner or a relative or a good friend told you that you really need to come here.

And it is a sad fact that the people who really need to be here are not going to be here mostly, but that's fine. If awakening eventually will come to the whole of humanity, but right now at this time, a certain segment of humanity is beginning to go through this evolutionary shift, which I sometimes call the awakening of consciousness. And I guess, although I have no plans, particular plans for this evening, but my feeling is that it's going to be about awakening, the awakening of human consciousness.

And not only about the awakening of human consciousness, I have a feeling that this evening is going to be an essential part of the awakening that's happening on the planet here and there. So I'd like this evening to be not only interesting for you on a conceptual level or entertaining, because that wouldn't be quite enough. And you might get bored after half an hour or so, but more importantly, I'd like this evening to be experiential for

you.

Something that goes beyond conceptual understanding or taking in new ideas, interesting ideas. And then you can go home afterwards and say, oh, that was interesting, what you talked about. I don't remember everything, but that was an interesting idea.

Maybe there may be one or two interesting ideas, but this is not what this evening is about. It's something deeper, a shift in consciousness. So I'd like you to experience as we spend this evening together, to experience or to deepen, because many of you are already going through this shift.

Then this evening is a deepening for you of this shift in consciousness. And for one or two of you, it may be the first time. And that may be one or two of those of you who didn't really want to come here, but were dragged here by someone else.

And you may get suddenly have your first glimpse of what is meant by awakening. And what in Zen they called Satori. And you suddenly go, oh, now I know what he's talking about.

That's what it is. And then you talk to a friend about it tomorrow and say, well, what is it? And say, well, I can't explain it, but I realized something.

Humanity is going through a very, what has been until now, a very slow evolutionary progression, human consciousness. So slow that you would hardly notice it. Humans are slow learners.

They repeat the same mistake again and again, the same thing that causes them suffering. They do it again and again and again, both personal on this personal level and on a collective level, the same mistakes politicians make and so on. Until a point comes when they can't stand the suffering anymore.

And that's always a good point to reach. And you go, and then suddenly an inner opening happens. Suffering has its purpose.

And many of you would not be here. I would even say most, perhaps even all of you would not be here if you had not had your share of human suffering. So retrospectively, we can be grateful for the suffering that we as individuals have gone through, because it has taken us to this point of the awakening of consciousness.

This also applies to the whole of humanity. Humanity is, you can consider it as an organism that is gradually evolving, the collective consciousness of humanity. Each individual is an expression of the collective consciousness of humanity.

And the collective consciousness of humanity is an expression of the one universal

consciousness. The greatest mystery of the universe, and perhaps this is a good starting point for our evening. The greatest mystery of the universe is not out in outer space, the mysteries of the galaxies, the mysteries of the black holes, the billions of galaxies that exist, that it is phenomenal, it's unbelievable.

And the greatest mystery is not on the atomic level, which is also unbelievable, that the world that is there, the atomic and subatomic level that scientists explore, which we only understand a tiny fragment of, just as we only understand the tiniest of fragments of what is out there. So you have the two realms, the two mysteries, the outer space, and then the macrocosm, and you have the microcosm. And people write books, great scientists write books about the mysteries of the universe.

And the amazing thing is, many of these books, very good books, fail to mention one word. They explore the mysteries of the universe, but there's one word, you can have a whole book on the mysteries of the universe, either the macrocosm or the microcosm, or the two together. The one word that's not mentioned is consciousness, which is the foremost fundamental mystery, the fact that the universe is conscious.

That is the most amazing miracle. How do I know that the universe is conscious? Well, I am conscious, you are conscious.

The universe is conscious in us. The universe is experiencing itself for a brief moment, as a human being. It's also experiencing itself for brief moments as a plant or an animal, and that's an amazing thing.

Now, scientists are probably never going to figure out what consciousness is, if it's even possible to figure out what consciousness is, because scientists is concerned with looking out there. You can either look out into outer space, or you look into the most, the innermost of matter. But what scientists don't look at is their own consciousness, which is the universe looking at itself.

So the awakening of human consciousness is, and I'll give you now the answer, in case you have better things to do. So I'll tell you the secret of the universe now. And so if you want to have a pint after this, it's okay.

At least you know the secret of the universe. The realization that there is more to you than meets the eye. The realization that, yes, you are obviously this physical body, this physical form.

That is the first thing that meets the eye when somebody looks at you. And of course, you're also your thoughts and your emotions and feelings. That's another level of who you are.

And that again is a form. The body is a form. And then you have the next level of who you are, which is thoughts and emotions, which is thought forms and emotional forms.

And most people derive their sense of identity, their sense of who they are from the movement of thought in their head. Thought identifies with certain things as you begin to grow up. It identifies with the first possessions that you have, the toys.

It identifies with the name that you are given. That's me. Your parents tell you, that's you.

Then the beginning of identification is the name. That becomes the receptacle for all other identifications, possessions, the toy. And you can see how painful it is once you have identified with something.

When it's taken away from you, this child will scream if a toy is taken away because the identification has already happened with something. And five minutes later, the child might lose interest in the toy completely. But when somebody takes it away, it is extremely painful because already at that stage, the child experiences the beginning of ego identity and how painful it is when the ego identity is injured or something is removed from it.

It hurts on a psychological level as if you had sometimes even more than a physical injury, the pain you would experience with a physical injury. And then comes the child goes up, more and more identifications come. People that you know, your relationships, you identify with your knowledge, you identify with your physical strengths, your ability.

Look what I can do. You can't do that, but I can do that. Look what I know.

I know that, but you don't know that. Let me tell you, this is how it is. Opinions, you accumulate opinions about this and that, and nothing wrong.

Everybody has opinions, but the opinions become part of your sense of self. You identify with these thoughts that constitute those opinions. So the opinions, which are thought forms, are imbued with a sense of self.

There is a self in them, a me. And you can notice that when somebody starts to question your opinion, you get defensive or upset or aggressive or fearful. You might even, well, not you, but a very unconscious person may even become violent, physical aggression.

Why? Because somebody questioned my opinions. There are even the entire religions that would...

And in the past, it's been like that. In the Middle Ages, Christianity was like, they will kill you if you disagree with the conventional beliefs. What, you don't believe what I believe or we believe?

Okay, let's kill you. Ego, egoic identity, whether personal or collective ego. There are the two aspects of ego.

But ego is always identification with something. And identification means it gives you your sense of self. This is why for people, it is so precious and they hang on to it and they defend it with their life.

It's, that's all they know, that's me. And it's totally normal. It's been like that for thousands of years, ego.

In the past, ego, and in certain societies, even nowadays, the predominant ego is the collective still, whereas in Western societies, ego tends to be more individualized. It started, of course, thousands of years ago with tribal egos. You had tribes and you identified with this particular tribe and you were nice to the people in your tribe, but not very nice to the people outside of your tribe because there were less than you.

All these were primitive, rudimentary manifestations of ego. But whatever it is, ego means you have a bundle of thoughts, predominant thoughts, as I said, opinions, likes, dislikes, the story of who I am, what people did to me, what I did, what I've achieved, what I know, what I can do, what I possess. And these are all really thought forms and they give you your sense of self.

It's very normal and you cannot stop a child from developing that kind of identity. It's a normal progression. You can't tell a child, do not, there's no such thing as possession.

Don't identify with that toy, it's not yours. Stop, stop, don't. But one can, as you begin to awaken, you begin to see in yourself that you carry an ego.

You might see, for example, that you become defensive or when somebody disagrees with your opinions. You can even have an ego around the city you live in, the team, sports team that you identify with. These are rudimentary ego forms.

If you have little else, you can, a huge part of their identity can be your football team. And then you, and then the others are your enemies who identify with another football team. And then you fight it out on Sunday afternoons.

So you have different manifestations of ego, but it's ego. It's a sense of self. You can have a spiritual ego.

Some of you might remember that before you went beyond that, you had a spiritual ego and spiritual ego means you have a sense of self that begins to form in your head, a self image of yourself as a more spiritual person than most others. Very subtle ego. You can have an ego of yourself as egoless.

A self image that says, I am one of the most egoless humans on the planet. And it's hidden. It doesn't necessarily explicitly say I am the most egoless person on the planet.

Well, it might do, but usually it's more hidden. It's implied. You look down on others who

still have their egos, whereas I'm free of it.

And these are more subtle forms. It's this ego, it's a more subtle form of ego than the person who gets into a fight against the opposing fans of the other football team, soccer team, whatever it is. But it's the same, the same mechanism is behind it.

And ego also, you always recognize it when that it compares itself with others. The moment you meet somebody or even just you see somebody in the street, the ego goes into comparison mode. And usually the result of comparison mode of the ego is it comes to the conclusion that you are either inferior or superior to the other.

Of course, it wants to be superior if it can, but some, it just doesn't work sometimes. So, and the ego tends to select the thing that is most, that is your strong point. That's what then we'll then focus on.

In my case, for example, the ego that, I could not develop an ego around a strong physical physique as a person who is good at sports or whatever. So, because I was a little guy who got bullied at school. So the ego said, what can I do?

What can I identify with? And wasn't particularly good looking. So it couldn't say, but I'm better looking than you.

Okay, that doesn't work either. Eventually it sought refuge in trying to be more knowledgeable and educated than others. So I started reading books and then in discussions, I could suddenly show off my knowledge and show that if you don't know that, let me tell you about that.

Okay, that worked for a while. Physical appearance is a very common thing for comparison. Do I look better than the other woman, man, whatever it is.

And then you look in the mirror and this is greatly enhanced these days by the technology that's available to us through Facebook and selfies. The original, in Greek mythology, the original story that shows the development, the beginning of ego was in the midst of Narcissus, who was a young man. Of course, at that time there were no mirrors, but he happened to look into a pool of water one day, this young man, and he saw that he was so beautiful and he fell in love with himself.

That's where the word narcissism comes from. So he fell in love with himself. There was an image of himself that he saw there.

He fell in love with the image, which to me means he identified with the image. This is a pictorial representation of an inner process. The image formation that gives you your sense of self, which is ego.

So that was the beginning of Narcissus. Now you don't need a pool of water anymore.

You have not only mirrors, more importantly, you have your smartphone and you can go.

And then you send it out into the world. You're not confined anymore to one person looking at you or two people. You send it out into the world and hundreds of people suddenly see you.

And then you're waiting for your egoic feedback, which usually comes in the form of little comments like, cool. Cool. I like it.

And if it's not you, you take a picture of the rest of you in a restaurant and you're eating this lovely meal. I am eating this meal, me. Look how great this meal is that I am eating.

Oh, and of course, many people who look at other people's posts feel diminished a little bit because their life is so interesting. And then what you do, you have to also pretend that your life is interesting and select all those things that make your life look interesting. In other words, and this is especially young people, you begin to, your life merges with a fiction, a fictional image, which is available to the public.

And you don't know it. This is an extension of egoic identity that has become possible through technology. Very seductive, but also extremely limiting.

It's a huge trap. The ego, of course, is never satisfied. Not for long.

It always is in a seeking mode because it doesn't feel fulfilled. It doesn't feel I am enough. It doesn't, it feels I'm lacking in something which may be either money or knowledge or looks or relationships, significant relationship, all kinds of things I'm lacking in, not enough.

So it's in seeking mode. But as it's pointed out in this book called *The Cause in Miracles*, it says the dictum of the ego is seek, but do not find. So it's always seek.

And because it's always seeking, it's always seeking for the next thing, which implies the future is extremely important for the ego. It looks to the next, the next thing. There's a continuous reaching out, an inability to be present here and now.

That's all part of the unconsciousness that I call. Unconsciousness is, in this terminology, complete identification with the mind. And this is where the ego resides.

It resides in your mind. It is a mental formation. It is a kind of fiction that every human being creates for themselves.

And of course you get a lot of feedback. So the particular fiction that you create for yourself depends to a large extent on the culture that you grew up in, the people you grew up with. They will tell you who you are as a child, and then you become conditioned by your surroundings, the surrounding culture, and your family, and so on.

So you are trapped with a mind-made sense of self. And this mind-made sense of self is also much more focused on the negative than the positive. That keeps the ego going.

If the ego can find that it opposes something or someone, it feels strengthened in its opposition. So the ego needs its enemies. It needs to say, no, you are wrong.

It needs to be right. Very strong tendency in the ego. It enhances itself by making others wrong.

It enhances itself by criticizing it, by condemning, by continuously judging, not only other people, but also places, situations you find yourself in. So it dwells much more on the negative than the positive. You may realize in your own life a positive event that happens in your life.

Let's say you see a beautiful sunset, and you go, oh, it's wonderful. And by the way, when you appreciate beauty like that for a moment, the ego is not operating. The ego is out of the way, and there's just, we'll come to that, there's just an aware presence, and you go, ah, ego is gone.

Thought has subsided momentarily, and then ego, there can be no ego without thought. There's just an awareness suddenly, and you look, there's a beautiful flower, the sunset, whatever it may be, and you go, oh, and then you may remember the next day, yes, I saw a beautiful sunset, but the egoic mind, the thinking might come to very much with that, says, yeah, that was a beautiful sunset, and then you tend to forget it. But take another event, somebody is rude to you, say something rude, you can think about that for hours.

You can tell others about it. You can elaborate on that, and you can think about what you're going to say back next time you meet him, you're going to say, oh, what you should have said, why didn't I say that? Then you call your friend, you know what he did?

I should have done that, why couldn't I think of that? Well, you're right, and you can, for hours, it goes on, and this is only a small example of how easy it is to, how a negative thought proliferates much more easily than a positive thought, and the ego loves it. It loves complaining, and there's always somebody who is not right.

When you sometimes listen to people telling others what others did, there's a common denominator in what they're saying that underlies whatever they're saying, that is, I'm always right, and the others are always wrong, and you know what he said then? But then I said to him, of course, you are always right. Amazing, and then the ego misinterprets people and events according to its conditioning.

So if you wanted to figure out all the elements that make up your ego, you would have to undergo several decades of psychoanalysis, so there wouldn't be much of a chance, really, to go beyond it by examining all the aspects of your ego, because it can be quite

complex. So this is not what I recommend here, although there's nothing wrong with you. Enjoy psychoanalysis, that's great.

So the ego is associated with a voice in the head that continuously operates in you, and that for most people, that real ego is an intrinsic part of the voice in the head, and for most people, that is who they think they are. They are that entity, and that entity speaks through them. You can see it when you observe people.

There is, they are in the grip of something when they talk. Something is operating through them, and they can't stop it, they just, they talk. Whatever they say may vary a lot.

A person coming from a totally different culture will say totally different things from somebody from this culture, and yet the common thing is it comes out of them, and if they're not speaking out aloud, they are thinking it, and they can't stop thinking. And you can see it when you look at people. There's something going on inside them, and when they look at you, you know that they're commenting continuously on their sense perceptions.

What they say depends on their conditioning, but the fact that they are saying something, that's the common thing. So there's something missing there. It's almost as if this human being had been taken over by something, and in a way, that is the case.

In evolutionary terms, it's been a wonderful thing to have developed the ability to think. That's been an enormous evolutionary step forward. It's an incredible tool, the ability to conceptualize, to think.

But this incredible tool, there's been a huge downside to it, like everything else in this universe. Everything that you receive, every great thing will have some downside. We live in the world of polarities.

You can't have just great, just great. There's always, oh, I didn't know it came with that. So the downside to the ability to think is that over the centuries and millennia, more and more, people began to be trapped in the movement of thought.

And when I say people, what I really mean is consciousness began to be completely trapped in the conceptual image-making mind without knowing it, so that most humans these days, except those who are going through the awakening process, most humans are completely identified with their conditioned mind. And the awakening begins when you, this very simple thing, and I believe most of you know exactly what I'm talking about. The awakening begins when you become aware of your thoughts, especially repetitive thoughts.

And you suddenly say, whoa. You recognize that certain thoughts have been going through your head for the past 10 or 20 years, same kinds of things, comments,

interpretations, and not only thoughts, but emotions that accompany those thoughts, because the emotion is, in many cases, a reflection of the thought. So if you worry at night, you feel fearful because the body reacts to the thought that there is something wrong, that you are in danger.

You're not, you're in bed. It's warm and cozy. But your mind is telling you that your life is critical.

It's you're in a critical situation. And if you're not in a critical situation now, you will be very soon. And you're completely identified with that movement of thought.

You are that. You truly believe every thought that arises in your mind that says, this is so, this is really critical. This is not going to work out.

I'm going to, what am I going to do? Am I going to lose my job? Where am I going to live?

What about the mortgage? Who's going to, can't, and it goes on. And your body says, this guy is in danger.

And fear arises, oh my God. And the emotion further amplifies the fearful thoughts because the thoughts react to the emotion now. There's a vicious circle.

First they create the emotion, then they react to the emotion and create even more thoughts of that kind. Until finally you're in, you have a panic attack. And you don't realize that you are creating it.

You don't realize that, and this is an amazing thing. The, let's call it unhappiness because these are all forms of, unhappiness is a generic term which covers all kinds of things. Unhappiness covers from a small upset to deep despair to irritation, to enormous anger.

They're all forms of unhappiness. Now, the amazing realization is the largest part of unhappiness that you experience in your life, let's say 90%, 95%, does not arise from the circumstances of your life. There remains 5% where obviously somebody close to you dies you weep, you become unhappy.

That's those 5%. Or suddenly you get home and your house has gone up in flames for a little while. You may be unhappy.

We'll come, these are more extreme cases. We may come to that. But 95% of your states of unhappiness, now to hear what I'm saying now, you need to verify in your own life in actual situations.

95% of your unhappiness is not caused by situations you find yourself in, work situation, living situation, financial situation, health situation. It is caused by the mental commentary about those situations. What your mind is saying makes you unhappy, not what's happening.

But you have to find, don't believe me, verify it for yourself. Start with simple situations when you're lining up at the supermarket or you're doing your shopping or at the airport or waiting for the bus or stuck in a traffic jam. So there you are waiting in this lineup or queue and you get, after a while, you get restless and your mind is starting to say things.

It says, why can't they train these people better? Why do they select the most stupid people to do these jobs? I just, I'm not, I need to be somewhere else.

Why are these people, why is it always, I always choose the wrong queue to wait in. Why? And the more the mind talks, the more upset you get.

And it's not pleasant. And when you finally reach the counter, you're very angry. And you might say something to the person and you're spreading the negative vibes to that person.

And then the cashier absorbs that to the person. How do you spread them to the next person? This is how negativity spreads.

Now, this is the simplest example of how unhappiness arises on a small scale. Now, in the same situation, if you're vigilant, you can observe that your irritation, your upset, your anger is not caused by standing there with your grocery in the basket, looking around. Because that situation is completely neutral.

It is caused by what your mind adds to the situation. That is the root cause of the emotions that you then experience, which are unhappy emotions. Now, the amazing thing is most people don't know that.

They think that what they are experiencing and the way in which their mind interprets their experience is a single phenomenon. They have never separated the two. So they are so identified with their interpretations and reactions that the event and the reaction are a single thing that they experience.

And that is deep unconsciousness. And so you go through life encountering all kinds of unpleasant situations, reacting to people. As you know, people are challenging.

But how much of what is happening between you and the other person is supplied, is manufactured by your mind, your mental interpretation of the other, how they should behave but don't, what they should have done but didn't do, what they should not have said but said, and so on. And you can go on to hold stories, making other people wrong, which is the ego loves it because it strengthens itself every time. You could criticize somebody by implication, you are better.

Whenever you can criticize someone, you are implied that you are in a superior position because you are judging the other. You can even do it to a situation or a place. You can criticize it.

So the ego inflates itself through that. And you don't know that this is happening. You get bigger and bigger.

The ego goes, and the more angry the ego gets, the better it is for the ego. Or if it's not angry, it can also be just miserable. Poor me.

Treated so unfairly by life. I had such a bad deal. Why did life do this to me?

Or you call it God, why did God do this to me? I don't believe in God anymore because he did such awful things to me. That's a huge ego too, because it's a mental image.

And you're superior in your own way too because you're superior in your misery to others. You are not as miserable as you. You have suffered so much more than they.

That ego is as big as the guy who works on Wall Street and says, I'm the master of the universe, or thinks it until the bank collapses. Amazing thing, the ego. So you begin to realize that the situations that you encounter are actually not that bad at all.

But the commentary that you supply, that your mind manufactures unconsciously, that's the cause of the largest part of unhappiness. I've even received, and I keep receiving, correspondents, even from people in prison, who tell me that they have learned this lesson. They are still in prison, some are in for life, or they say they're in for another 10 years.

And they say, I feel free now. What they have done, they have given up commenting mentally on their situation. And that means it's the end of the ego.

They're no longer fighting, they're no longer against. They just say, this is what is. And what has happened now is they've become completely present in the now, which is the end of the ego.

They have become internally aligned with the present moment, which is as it is, always. And in their particular case, in prison, there isn't much they can do. Well, they could plan an escape.

That might be an option, but it's a more distant option. This is a good example of surrender to what is in this moment. So an enormous realization is to see that situations are neutral and you lose a large part of your unhappiness by relinquishing the mental commentary that criticizes, judges, blames, complains.

Great thing, complain. Oh, that keeps the ego going. Complain, it's so awful what they complain about this, about them, about him, about her, about a place, what they did, what they.

And the ego doesn't want to let go, but there's a time when an awareness arises, suddenly you become aware of what your mind is saying and doing, aware. For a

moment, you're able to step back and realize these are just thoughts. There's the movement of thought.

And this is the awakening is when you realize that in the gap between two thoughts, you have not disappeared. In the gap between two thoughts, there is something else that is much deeper than the ego. Let's look at this gap between two thoughts now.

Here's one thought and here it comes to an end. Now the other one hasn't started yet. And there's a gap.

The other thought is here. One thought here comes to an end. The other thought here hasn't started yet.

And here we go. That's an amazing thing. What was that?

Let's try it again. The space of no thought. And in that space of no thought, you can actually look around too.

And there's no mental commentary anymore. But have you become suddenly unconscious? Have you suddenly disappeared?

No. There is a deeper dimension in you that has suddenly emerged. We can call that stillness.

We can call that presence. We can call it awareness. So you can be conscious.

And this is the secret. This is the next step in the evolution of consciousness for humans. And this gives you, as we will see, that gives you your true and deeper sense of who you are than anything your ego could ever do.

You are the essence of who you are is this aware presence that is deeper than thinking. When you look around this room or anywhere, wherever you may be, you take in your sense, you are aware of your sense perceptions. When thoughts go through your head and you realize that certain thoughts are going through your head, you no longer necessarily believe in every thought that comes into your head.

You just say, oh, there it is. You just see it. And it goes.

Then it doesn't proliferate anymore when there's an awareness there. It only proliferates when the thought seduces you into giving it your total attention. It drags your consciousness with it.

And you go, hmm. Hmm. And then you start thinking one little negative thought goes to many others.

There's something wrong with me. There's something wrong with him. There's

something wrong with the universe.

There's something very wrong here. Very wrong. So sense perceptions, you hear, you see, you're aware of that.

You can be aware of thoughts. You can be aware of feeling something. You're aware of an emotion.

Usually, that's what makes up a person's life is what is a person, what does your life consist of? Very simply, the ingredients are as follows. Sense perceptions.

Thoughts, many thoughts about previous sense perceptions. And possible future sense perceptions. And all kinds of other weird thoughts and emotions that accompany the thoughts.

So sense perceptions, thoughts, emotions. That's me. That's my life.

Whatever I perceive and think about, obviously, that's me. But you might've forgotten something important. That is, when you perceive, you're aware of your perceptions.

When the thought arises, you're aware of your thought. When you feel an emotion, you're aware of an emotion. So it all presupposes that there's something in you that makes sense perceptions possible.

There's something in you that makes thoughts possible. There's something in you that makes emotions possible. And can you become aware of that?

If you can become aware of that, then you become aware of really the essence of who you are. And what is that? Consciousness.

Can you become aware that you are conscious rather than always only be conscious of this and conscious of that and conscious of that? Can you become aware that you are conscious right here? And now, what is the most essential thing about you?

Ask yourself that. What's the most essential thing about you? Is it your memories?

Well, even if you lost half your memories, you would still be you. What's the most essential thing about you right now? Can you get to the essence of you?

What does it feel to be you? What is that most fundamental feeling of beingness, of I am? Not even I am this or I am that.

That is thought. You add some thought added to the... There's a sense of beingness, of presence, that is more fundamental than whether you are a man or a woman or whether you are young or old or whether your history is pleasant or unpleasant or predominantly terrible or not so bad.

All that becomes secondary to this feeling of the simple fact that you are present. Can you sense your own presence? It has no content to it.

It's just pure awareness. This is what Jesus was actually trying to explain when he said, the kingdom of heaven, you can't say it's there or it's over there because I tell you, it's the most, it is the most, the innermost part of who you are. That's my translation.

You can't say over there. So in other words, who you essentially are cannot be an object of your consciousness. Every thought you have about yourself is an object of your consciousness.

You're thinking a thought, but who is the you that's thinking the thought? The thought is arising out of your consciousness. So essentially you are conscious presence.

You can sometimes see it in a little baby much more clearly if you want to see it in another, a one-year-old looking back at you, eyes wide open. And the baby has not yet formulated concepts and thoughts. It's just a pure expression of consciousness.

And you look into the eyes of the baby and it can reflect back to you for a second or two who you are at the deepest level. This is why people love to look at little babies because the baby looks at you and has no opinion about you. It just goes.

And it's so lovely. It loves looking at you. And if you can't find a baby, even a dog will do that.

This is why it's so liberating to, there's something that many people are attracted to dogs, cats too, but let's just talk about one animal. You're attracted to the, because you look at the dog and the dog looks at you and there is the consciousness looking through the eyes of the dog. That's the essence of the dog.

And you look into the eyes of the dog who has not arrived yet at conceptualization. It's a species that is still pre-thought. We are not going pre-thought by the way.

We are going post-thought, but the dog is pre-thought and you meet the dog in the pre-thought state of consciousness. And it liberates you for a moment from your thought burdened sense of identity. When the dog like looks back at you and the tail is probably wagging, just because you looked at the dog, it's already in a state of joy.

And that reflects back to you, your innermost being too, because the same consciousness shines through all beings, but at different levels. So you'd look at that dog and you, oh, and for a moment it frees you of yourself. It frees you of the ego.

And you may even notice that for a moment there is no thought in your mind. There's just a sense of beingness and you get it from the dog. The dog reflects it back to you.

This is why I have a little book produced with a cartoonist and the title of, it's mostly

about dogs, but cats are also in it. It's called Guardians of Being, which is what I call the animals that live with humans because they reflect something back to you. And this consciousness you can see in another human being too, if you can feel it in yourself, the consciousness that you are, the essence of who you are, that has nothing to do with your personal history.

The only thing your personal history may have been good for is it has taken you into this realization that you are deeper than that. And it could well be that because your personal history has been not a very happy one, that could be the very reason why it has taken you to this point where you are able to go beyond because you are fed up with the unhappiness that was produced mostly by your mind. So this is a wonderful point to reach.

And many of you have already reached it or reached it long time ago. You're fed up with unhappiness. I don't need anymore.

By the way, unhappiness is optional. Challenges continue to come. It doesn't mean when you awaken spiritually, suddenly life will not challenge you anymore and you go.

No. And with every challenge, there's a deepening of your presence. And some challenges might even pull you out of presence again, and you fall back into unconsciousness for a little while.

And then you emerge again. So we're talking about identity, which is the most fundamental thing. Where do you get your sense of self from?

This is the most fundamental thing in your life because if you derive your sense of self from a fiction in your mind, which ultimately is what the ego is, your whole life will reflect back to you that this is a fiction and it will color all your experiences. It will create a neediness. It will create all kinds of emotions that are completely unnecessary, that are manufactured by your mind and the identity in the mind that we call the ego.

The almost like a little entity that doesn't want to go away. It wants to, I want to suffer a bit more. I need my enemies.

I need to complain. What can I complain about now? Well, why does he talk so much?

He's been going on talking for so long. I can't stand it anymore. No.

So the words are pointing to something in you. Then of course you cannot undo your personal history. Of course you remember your personal history and there's your life situation.

Everybody has a life situation. You have relationships. You have a work situation probably or you have lost your job then you don't have a work situation, but that's

similar.

You have a living situation. You have a health situation. You have a relationship situation, a huge source of suffering and occasional happiness.

Those things make up your life. You have those situations. But is that all there is to who you are?

So you need to be free. You awaken to who you are beyond your history and your life situation. The essence, your essential being is the aliveness of presence, consciousness.

And you can only get that in the gap between two thoughts. This is why stillness is an important pointer to it. Stillness does not mean you fall asleep.

It could mean you fall asleep because the habitual level where humans exist is thinking. Then the only time when you are free of thinking is when you fall asleep, if you haven't awakened yet. When you move towards sleep, thinking gradually slows down.

When you get very sleepy, there's very little thought going on in your head and you go... And you might even like that because suddenly you can't remember what your problems are anymore. And you feel the pull of sleep, which is so delicious.

What we call tiredness, it's so normal, we accept it. But if you really look at what tiredness is, something absolutely delicious is pulling you. Come this way.

You must come this way. It's so delicious. And at some point, even if you try not to go there, the attraction, attraction of that place becomes so overwhelming that you have to go there.

And in the last moment when you still have some consciousness, you feel, ah. Even if you were out in the cold and know if I fall asleep, I'm going to die. In the last moment, you would still feel the deliciousness of going, ah.

It wouldn't, the rest wouldn't matter anymore. You're moving towards the source. You're moving to regenerate.

You're moving, but you don't know it anymore. You're moving below thought towards sleep. Another way of moving below thought is having a few drinks.

And that can free you. For some people, it frees you. It frees them of their unhappiness and they become jolly.

Suddenly, suddenly they can enjoy life because they're not thinking much anymore. They're just, it's a way of being present too in some way. And then you think I need another one because if I feel jolly now, I'll be feeling even more jolly with the next one.

But that's not the case because the more you drink, the more you move towards unconsciousness. So you're falling again. You're falling below thought until finally you fall off the chair.

So we are not going there below thought. Yes, that can free you also. But as we awaken spiritually, as consciousness awakens in us, universal consciousness awakens in us, we become conscious of being conscious.

And the moment you are conscious of being conscious, you have risen above thought and you are still, you have transcended thought, which means you're able to think, but you're no longer trapped by it or in it. You're no longer at the mercy of your thoughts. You can use them.

They can still operate, but you can also by choice, and this possibility is coming to many of you already and to many more of you, I would say after this evening, to realize it is possible for you and even desirable in many, many instances to transcend thought and simply be aware. That is by the way, the state of, that is the entire teaching of Zen is contained in this. It Zen teaches you that you can rise above thought, become free of thought and just be aware.

This is why the Zen master often looks so fierce because he's in that fierce awareness and he goes in the old drawings of Zen masters or they might, one Zen master when asked, please explain Zen, the only thing he would ever do was raise his finger and look at you. That was his teaching and he became famous, famous teacher. Some people got it, others didn't.

If they didn't get it, they said, please explain Zen to me. And he would go. And some people went, wow.

[Speaker 8] (7:32:22 - 7:32:23)

Thank you.

[Speaker 1] (7:32:25 - 9:00:16)

And others didn't get it, they said, did you hear my question? There's in Zen, for those of you who are interested in Zen or might even have spent a decade in a Zen monastery, there is nothing to understand in Zen. You cannot understand Zen because there is nothing to understand.

Zen is about transcending thinking, not falling below thinking, but rising above thinking. This is why that is Zen. Oh, oh.

Now, many of you, especially after this evening, will discover in yourself the ability to step beyond thought when you don't want thought. Not perhaps always, sometimes the

challenge is maybe too much and you fall back into thought for a while, it's fine. But from time to time, and you can actually invite it into your life in many, many situations that are relatively neutral, step out of thought and lose the illusion that in order to hold your life together, you need to think all the time about you and your life.

And if you stop thinking about you and your life, it's all going to fall apart. It's not going to, it's going to fall apart if you overthink, which most people do. Overthinking is a disease.

Overthinking means you're completely identified with thinking, you are in fact addicted to thinking, a lot of which is not only completely unnecessary, but actually harmful to your health, to your wellbeing, and to other people. It's harmful to you also because you're making yourself unhappy through it. And if you are making yourself unhappy, the chances are that you're making other people unhappy too.

So overthinking, identification with thinking, that is all part of the unconsciousness, or the old consciousness, as I call it. Now, a certain percentage of humans has reached a point of readiness where they are able to transcend thinking, become aware of themselves as awareness, as presence, as consciousness. And that becomes their sense of identity or sense of self, their presence.

It doesn't need, there's no longer any superiority or inferiority in it. There is in it a recognition. When you now look, not just the dog, it's easier with a dog or the baby, but when you look at another human being, and you can, you're not trapped in the conceptualizing, judgmental mind.

You are looking at another human being, and you can sense the background to your perception of this other human being, the sense perception. You may be looking and may be listening. The background to your sense perception is the space of awareness.

You're looking as a conscious presence, and not as a person, at this human being, because for a moment, your mind is still while you're looking and listening, or just looking at another, into the eyes of another human being. You, either somebody close to you or somebody you only meet casually in a shop or whatever, but for a moment, you're looking. And there is a recognition at that moment.

When you know yourself as consciousness, the wonderful thing is you recognize that essence in every other human being or any other living thing. And that recognition, you recognize that there's something of the same essence that is in you, also in the other. And you are able to, so to speak, look through the personality, which is there, which manifests through their words, whatever they are saying, the conditioned personality, which is their mind, their egoic mind, that of course will be there.

But you're able, if you are still and present, you can look at them, and then for a

moment, you sense their essential beingness or consciousness, because you know your own consciousness, and that's the one, the recognition of oneness. And it is only there, out of that state of consciousness, that that which frees you from eternal conflict with other humans, which is ego condemns you to, it is only that that can free you from the eternal conflict. And out of that emanates that which makes you truly human or more than human, almost, empathy, a loving kindness towards another arises, a benevolence towards another human, despite, no matter what their personality is, a deeper goodwill towards another, benevolence, goodwill, love, not in the emotional sense, or certainly not in the egoic sense, love in the egoic sense is a clinging.

I want you, I need you, don't you dare leave me. You know what I'm going to do to you if you leave me. No, a different, a love that really, we should have other words for it in the Old Testament, in the old Greek, ancient Greek, agape is the word for that spiritual love, which is an outflow of goodwill, but all that really means you recognize your oneness with the other, not through some explanation in the head, but as a direct sensing, then you can really like another human.

You can even like another human being despite their personality, which has its quirks and idiosyncrasies like every personality has, you can look through. You can start with a dog, and then if your presence is strong enough with a human, and it may be easier, I wouldn't recommend that you immediately start with family members, because there are humans with whom you share a lot of history, and there's a lot of histories accumulated in the mental and emotional field, and that's not so easy then to see the essential beingness of uncle, John, or aunt, or whoever, or your parents. Start with strangers, somebody you meet in a shop, the receptionist, while you're talking briefly, you look at them, look into their eyes, and there's just a spacious presence, and it's beautiful. And some of them will notice that there's something there that they like when you're with them.

They may not know what it is. They may not know that you are present, and that they're not being judged by you. They just feel comfortable in your presence.

They like you. They don't know why. That is often the case.

Now, be careful that the ego is so cunning that it can come in through, even here, it can come in through the back door again, and then you get the sense that you are doing something to that person. And then you get sense, I'm going to free you of your ego. And you might even say, all right, now I'm doing something to you.

Oh. So just to be aware that ego can come back in at any point, but it is a beautiful way of interacting with another human. The next thing you can try is when you go to a meeting, in case you have meeting in your workplace, occasionally you have meetings, you sit around a table, all kinds of egoic stuff is going on.

People talk and disagree and argue, and some get angry. You can be the one person who holds the space of presence there. And you look at everybody while they talk in that alertness that is presence.

One could say it is a high frequency of presence that in that alertness, you look and you listen, and then the next person speaks, and you look and you listen, and the next person. And then at some point, you may find yourself contributing something, and suddenly words come out of your mouth. And that would be a helpful contribution and more likely to be something fresh and new than just a repetition of old opinions and old viewpoints.

Because you're now in touch with the dimension out of which creativity arises. You're in touch with that primordial intelligence that cannot be measured with IQ tests. It is deeper than that.

It all arises out of that. One thing that I briefly mentioned, some of you may question what this consciousness is. There's still in mainstream science, if they even ever mentioned the word consciousness, they say it is a by-product of the activity of the brain.

It is a by-product, an epiphenomenon, another fancy word for it, of the chemical soup in the brain. On one level, it's a chemical soup. On a deeper level, it's atoms swirling around.

And a by-product of the chemical soup in the brain is, they say, that there's consciousness. The chemical soup produces it. Somehow.

The amazing fact is any scientist who does not have a huge ego or will admit that we know almost nothing about the brain or how certainly not consciousness. Nobody knows what a thought is, where does it reside? What is a thought?

What is a memory? I believe a point will come perhaps soon when science will realize that consciousness transcends the brain, but is associated with the brain in the same way that a radio receiver or a television set receives transmissions and then gives them form. It does not mean that the radio produces the program or the television set.

So if a brick should fall on my head right now, I hope I'm not manifesting it by saying it, I would stop speaking and it would appear that I have lost consciousness, of course. Therefore, a scientist might say, you see, destroy the brain and you destroy consciousness. But it could be that the brain would then no longer be capable of transmitting, receiving consciousness, channeling consciousness into this dimension.

Just a brief, just a possibility. I don't want to go too far with philosophical speculation. This is how I see the secret of the universe.

You may know that in ancient, many ancient cultures, the sun was regarded as a deity and the people would pray to the sun. There's some, there's a certain reason behind it and that is that all life that on this planet, including your physical body, the warmth in your physical body and so on is given by the sun. It's an outpouring, a continuous outpouring of energy and it all comes from the sun.

So they worship the sun, regarded the sun as a deity. The sun is the closest approximation, if one wants to use an analogy of what God is. God is the transcendent, timeless, eternal consciousness that exists outside of this dimension.

Totally undefinable, totally incomprehensible. It would be absurd to say the human mind could even begin to comprehend that. But that central sun, consciousness to me is like the rays of the sun.

The sun sends out rays continuously. Every ray of consciousness becomes a human being or another life form. It incarnates into form.

And then the consciousness in you, therefore, the consciousness in me is all expression of the one consciousness that continuously emanates through all life forms and experience itself in this dimension and grows and evolves in this dimension gradually where there's time and experiences the universe and as it does, it creates the universe as it experiences. Creation still goes on. So that is the self-exploration of consciousness in this universe where every single one of us is an expression of this one consciousness.

So the consciousness is the light of God. It is not God. Yes, it is.

It's the light of God in the same way that the sunshine is not the sun, and yet it is the sun. It emanates from the sun. It is still connected to the sun.

So, and this is why some great mystics, both in the West and East, India, even medieval Europe, have said things like the closest you can get to God is becoming still, or somebody else said, stillness is the language God speaks. Everything else is a bad translation. And also in the, there's a beautiful line in the Old Testament, very profound, mystical statement.

It says, be still and know that I am God. It's an amazing and very profound spiritual statement. Now, the strange thing about this statement is, first it points to when you are still, you are aware of yourself as the stillness.

You are aware of yourself as consciousness, because that stillness is just pure presence, pure consciousness. Be still, know that I am God. All these words, each word that this sentence consists of, these words, each word is synonymous with each other word.

Be is the being. Still is the presence, which is the being. Know, there is a knowing, there's a deep intelligence in that stillness.

It is the essential I am, which Jesus also said, according to one of the Gospels, that he made this strange statement. Before Abraham was, I am. But what an amazing statement, that the juxtaposition of the past tense and the eternal present tense of I am.

So I am is also used in India for, to point to your essential identity. And it was Ramana Maharshi, the Indian sage, who recommended, he recommended that you meditate on the question, who am I? Who am I?

He said, take that question into meditation and see what happens. So what you do, then you go into meditation and you ask, who am I? Now, if you find an answer on a conceptual level to that question, you're wrong, you missed it.

So if you go into meditation and say, who am I? And then you go, oh, I got it now, I know who I am. Yeah, okay.

No, you haven't. The secret is, we can do it here now. Who am I?

The secret is that there is no answer that follows that question. There is only the space of awareness. And that's who you are.

Who am I? Oh, that's it. That is so simple.

It's so simple and subtle that humans have overlooked it for thousands of years. The simple realization of who you are, that is very much like the ray of sunlight that went continuously exploring the universe. Let's say that's you and looking everywhere and thinking, and getting involved in this and identifying with this and that.

And suddenly it gets very unhappy, can't stand it anymore. And then it goes, who am I? Still hasn't got the answer.

And suddenly the attention, suddenly the sunlight stops in its doing and becomes a way of being. And then it becomes aware that it's not just out here, it's, there's an enormous depth to it. And it becomes aware that it's connected to the sun.

And that frees it from the usual state that is associated with the ego, which is fear. Suddenly fear goes, a deep trust in life arises because you feel yourself connected to something vast that is you and yet transcends who you are. And to sense that connectedness is frees you from anxiety and fear.

And that I would suggest is the true meaning of the spiritual word, faith. Faith is absence of fear. That's faith is a deep trust, not in yourself as a person, but something deeper that is you and yet transcends you.

That is the next step in human evolution is for humans to live their lives in connectedness with that dimension rather than on the egoic level. And then you manifest a different world. You manifest no longer this absurd level of suffering that

humans have been inflicting on each other that can only be described as a severe collective mental dysfunction.

Only then could you explain how in the 20th century alone, the first half of the 20th century alone, humans have killed in the excess of a million of their fellow humans. That's completely insane. But even that seen from a transcendent viewpoint, even that is part of the evolution of consciousness.

The realization that that is insane is part of the evolution of consciousness. And every death, of course, of every, every violent death of every human is tragic on this level. But it is also true that in every human, every human is an expression of the one consciousness that is experiencing itself as a human.

And as such, the essence of every human is beyond death. Death is the end of this form, this brief lived form. And even if on another level, the form continues, you will eventually awaken.

Every form is destined to awaken to its connectedness to the one consciousness. In Buddhism, there's a lovely saying which says, eventually, even the blade of grass will become enlightened. In meaning, eventually, all life forms return to the source.

All life forms begin to realize their connectedness to the source. The source discovers itself, its own nature, through the realization of these, all these life forms. But to keep it on the practical level, for us, the essential thing is inviting into our life these moments of presence.

On the one hand, inviting them into our life. On the other hand, also recognizing when they arise spontaneously. Next time you look at a dog, you're not only aware of the dog and how good it feels, but you're also aware of that for a moment, thinking has subsided for two or three seconds.

When you look at a beautiful tree, or you look at the sky in the morning, open the curtains, look at the sky, no matter whether it's cloudy or blue, for a moment, be there as the aware presence for the sense perception. When you're waiting for something, observe how your mind is resisting that moment, let go of that. You remember what we talked about, all the stuff that the mind adds, that is unnecessary baggage, that creates unhappiness, come into the present moment, alignment with this, and be the presence.

Waiting at the supermarket, if the mind starts up with its complaining, realizing that you are creating unhappiness for yourself, the mind is creating unhappiness for yourself, now suddenly you have a choice. You don't need to be at the mercy of automatic thinking anymore. You step out of automatic thinking, take two or three deep breaths, become aware of your breath in and out, takes you into the present moment and realize this moment is actually okay.

It's even quite pleasant. And the mind had been telling you that it's awful. And in many cases, you'll come to the realization, this moment is actually not that bad, but the mind has been telling you that it is.

And less and less do you then add the unnecessary interpretations to the present moment that spoil your joy of life. And suddenly you experience much more joy and in the beingness of the present moment. And you go around and appreciate, appreciate more the little things that arise continuously around you that are actually profound and beautiful in their simple presence, a cloud, a leaf on a tree, a flower, how the light is reflected off the floor.

You can, everywhere there's an aliveness around you in other human beings. You can appreciate their aliveness. And then comes also a very powerfully transformational way of relating to the present moment, which is gratitude for what is.

Not gratitude, I wouldn't recommend gratitude through creating some mental story that other people are worse off than me, so I really should be happy. So you depend on the misery of others to make you feel better. No, a gratitude that is deeper that comes directly from recognizing the goodness of things without any commentary.

To appreciate what is, to appreciate that you're breathing, to appreciate a glass of water that you're drinking, to appreciate the shape of a piece of furniture, a fruit, anything you see. So I'll give you as a last spiritual practice that was given by, I believe also it was a Zen teacher. A disciple came to him and said, I'm going to travel now for a year.

Can you give me a spiritual practice to take with me on my journey so that I can become enlightened? And the teacher said, yeah, okay. This is your spiritual practice.

No matter where you are or what you're doing or what the situation is that you are in, say the following mantra. Thanks for everything. I have no complaint whatsoever.

So he sent off the disciple. The disciple came back after a year, came back to the master, and the master said, well, the disciple said, didn't work. I used it a lot, but it didn't work.

And then the master said, thanks for everything. I have no complaint whatsoever. And at that moment, the disciple became enlightened.

Thank you. So as you know, here we are mainly concerned with entering the realm of being, of presence. There hasn't been a lot for you to do, just little doings, walking from here to there, eating your food, some talking, some thinking, which is a doing.

But mostly this has been and still is about connecting with being, the dimension of stillness beyond thinking, out of which all thinking arises. Now, when you leave here, many of you, if not most of you, are going back into more doing again. So your challenge

will be not to lose the rootedness in that deeper dimension while you are engaged in whatever you do.

And the world will do all it can to challenge you, to pull you out of that rootedness. And it will tell you, not in so many words, but it will, in the form of events and people and happenings and things not working, and so will tell you, this is all important. Give me your fullest attention.

This really matters. It may matter, but as I put it, all those things matter relatively. They may be relatively important.

Whether or not you miss your plane, whether you're not, you find that great job or you lose that great job, or whatever happens, it's all relatively important. But only one thing is of absolute importance, and that is your connectedness with being so that that dimension is with you, as you, in your daily life. That's the challenge.

A few things will be helpful in this. One is letting go of the unconscious assumption that there should be no problems and difficulties. And if they are, that they are undesirable obstacles that really shouldn't be there in the form of events or people or situations.

But if you look back on your life, and I look back on my life, it's always been challenging. There are brief moments when it's not challenging, and that's great, but you know very well that life won't leave you alone. It'll challenge you one way or another.

If you look at the world situation, it's the same. There's all kinds of challenges in the news. First there were the communists, there was a Cold War, and then there are suddenly other huge challenges arising, and it goes on and on.

So in the words of the first sentence in the book called *The Road Less Traveled*, which I never read because the first few sentences were so good I didn't need to read the rest of it. And the first sentence is, now this might go against certain new age beliefs, and it might at first sound negative because the first sentence is, life is difficult. That doesn't sound very inspiring.

And then the next sentence, although I don't remember, it literally says, and if you know that, you're completely okay with the fact that life is difficult, then it's no longer difficult. So that's all I read, because that says it all already. How does that work?

How is life, when you know that life is difficult, it's no longer difficult? You try to work that out. Well, here's the explanation.

It's really only difficult if you think that it shouldn't be difficult. Because then you're in continuous resistance to things and people and events. But once you accept it's an essential part of life of being difficult, then whenever the next difficulty rises, you say, oh, there's life again, being difficult.

In other words, what does that do? It creates an acceptance of what is. If you carry around the assumption in your head, it shouldn't be difficult.

There should be no difficult people and obstacles and problems, and things should not get canceled, and plans should not be interrupted, and nobody should fall ill, and then people shouldn't die, certainly. That's a travesty. These things should not, they're all dreadful.

There's an underlying assumption, things should go smoothly. And of course, sometimes they do go smoothly. But the irony or the paradox is that once you recognize the fact that life is difficult, that life is not meant to make you happy, it's not meant to make you unhappy, but it makes you unhappy if you have a wrong attitude towards life.

Happiness comes with accepting the fact that challenges are an essential part of the evolutionary process for all life forms. So challenges for you, even if you don't call them challenges, challenge is a nice term because something positive is already implied within it. If you call it problems or bad stuff happening, then it doesn't sound so good.

Challenges are here to awaken you. And even if you're awakening, life continues to give you challenges, and then the awakening accelerates and deepens. And at whatever stage you're at, you won't be free as long as you're here of challenges.

So if you recognize that, you no longer need to be in a hostile, confrontational relationship with life, I don't, sorry about the term, you're not pissed off all the time with another thing happening, I'm still pissed off with life. Just can't go on. And people just can't take anymore, just.

Then you can, there's a kind of accepting, not necessarily welcoming, but sometimes welcoming every situation that arises. That is. So if you welcome it, there's a book by Byron Katie called Loving What Is.

That means you are in an accepting relationship with whatever arises. Of course, it all arises in the present moment. Anything else that arises is in your mind.

So you need to differentiate between challenges, problems, difficulties that are actual in the form of people, events, or situations, and challenges, problems, and difficulties that are fictitious, that are purely created by your mind, creating pseudo problems. For example, when you worry in the middle of the night, huge problems. Are those the real challenges of life?

No, these are fictitious problems created in your mind, dwelling on things, things that happened but should not have happened. Those are not the real challenges of life. Those are the challenges of your mind, the mind-created problems.

So you need to very clearly differentiate in your life between actual difficulties,

challenges, or problems. There is a person who is shouting at you. That's an actual.

Or there is the thing you just missed your flight and you can't get on the next one or the next one. Or financial challenges, relationship challenges, family situations, work situations, actual things that happen that need to deal with. But then there's a huge amount of suffering that is generated not by the actual challenges of life, but by the fictitious problems that the mind creates, sometimes around the actual challenges of life.

And sometimes out of, no, out of thin air, things that could go wrong. So on the one hand, you have your mind creating a lot of useful, useless suffering through unconscious thinking. And then you have the actual situations in your life.

So you don't have to endure your mind. When it says life is difficult, that shouldn't really include your mind because that's something you can do something about immediately. You don't have to live with a dysfunctional mind.

Millions still do. That is something that can be transcended. And this is, of course, what we are doing here, what you are doing as part of the awakening is a huge amount of the life is difficult.

A huge percentage of that difficulty is created by the mind. That we can deal with, that can change. That does not have to be.

Once, when you do that, then the next part is actual situations will still occur. Once you know that, then you can come to a more surrendered approach to life and actually almost, or actually welcome the difficult people in your life, the difficult situations in your life, loss, and so on, without demanding unconsciously, not in so many words, perhaps, that demanding this should not be happening and there's something dreadfully wrong when things go wrong in your life. And that makes life really difficult.

This is what the man means at the beginning of the book, the author, when he says, life is difficult, but when you know that life is difficult and you fully come to terms with the fact that life is difficult, it's not difficult anymore because the greatest difficulty is the mental resistance to things that arise and the underlying assumption that they should not. And so once you have then a surrendered relationship with the present moment, because everything arises in the present moment, then it's not really that difficult anymore. And you can, even in the midst of turmoil, still be connected with the realm of being within yourself.

So there's always a core of stillness, if only in the background. And no matter what happens, that core of stillness is there, if you want to call it stillness. It's also, as we saw, and as you know, it's also the source of satisfaction, where true satisfaction or a true sense of wellbeing that goes beyond physical wellbeing, a true sense of wellbeing comes from.

It's the transcendent dimension. So life will challenge you with its difficulties, both small and big. Small happen probably every day in some form.

So you don't get upset anymore when things don't go according to plan. You don't get upset and complain or irritated or angry when people don't behave the way they should behave. And that makes it so much easier when you no longer demand that these things should not be the way they are.

Nobody should, they shouldn't cancel flights. Weather shouldn't be in such a way they can't fly anymore. The body shouldn't get old.

Nobody should have catch an illness. Now, a lot of illnesses are produced, or you're much more prone to have an illness if your mind is very dysfunctional because that lowers the physical resistance. It affects the body.

What the mind does obviously affects the body. Even mainstream medicine is beginning to recognize your mental emotional state affects your physical state. So if your mental emotional state is very dysfunctional, your body's resistance to illness decreases.

The likelihood increases that you catch something. There are other causes of illness. So nobody can be totally free and say, I'm never going to be ill.

The body is a physical vehicle with a certain lifespan. And as it approaches the later stages of its lifespan, it's just like an old car. Things start to go wrong with it.

It's another form. And the older your car gets, the more things need to be replaced. And the time comes when it's just not working anymore.

So it will be easier for you to deal with the challenges of life. If you actually realize that the challenges aren't good, they force you to awaken. And that's what's happening here.

For a long time, challenges, the only thing that challenges do is they make people suffer. And that can go on for a long, long time. I sometimes say everybody has a spiritual teacher, everybody on the planet.

For most people, their spiritual teacher is their suffering. Because eventually the suffering brings about an awakening. And then there are a few who are advanced enough who already have gone through their suffering.

And then they come into contact with an actual spiritual teaching in the form of wisdom, tradition, or an actual spiritual teacher, or even in the form of a book. And they suddenly say, oh, wow, yes. And then evolution accelerates.

So for you, there's already this acceleration because otherwise the evolution of consciousness is very slow. Evolution works very slowly. And for many humans, it's still the case.

That's why we repeat the same mistakes, politicians and so on. Haven't they read any history books? Just go back 50 years and then you make the same mistake again, go back 40 years.

So condemned to repeat the past, this is part of karma. And then you reach that stage where an acceleration begins and you're all at that stage, which is wonderful. So whenever confronted with a challenge in whatever form, look at it.

Be careful that your mind does not weave a whole huge web of useless thinking around it. Then it gets really difficult. And realize most challenges are actually fairly simple.

Here's the situation or the person. I can either do something about it. What action is possible now?

And with that comes that clear looking. What action is needed now? There's that presence flows.

And presence can become, there can be a presence-inspired doing. Before there is a presence-inspired doing, you need to look at the situation. And when you look, look not necessarily just visually, but put your awareness on the situation.

And there is a time span where you are in order to access primordial intelligence, which is in the stillness. Whenever a situation arises, you look at the situation and in the looking, which means giving it attention, there is no thinking. There's just an alert looking.

Facing it. And then how long that is varies. It could be a few seconds.

It could be a minute. It could be two minutes. But often a few seconds of giving it alert attention is enough.

Then whatever is needed will come to you. There are several possible causes of action. And then one that's responding to a situation.

Or you look and you realize nothing can be done right now. And that's perfectly fine. And while nothing can be done, you accept what is and are still connected and sometimes more deeply connected in the face of even sometimes unpleasant circumstances, more deeply connected with a true source of satisfaction, which you can quickly access if you become friendly with what is.

Just becoming friendly with what is, and immediately it's easier to access the source of satisfaction and that which transcends the ego. The ego is sustained by continuous resistance, denial, it's against it. Whatever it is, I'm against it.

And it's usually it's the present moment with brief exceptions. So coming to accept the is-ness of people and situations and realizing this situation cannot be otherwise from the

way it is. Why not?

It should be. No, it can't be because it already is. The entire universe, the entire history of the universe has brought about, because since everything is connected to everything else, anything that happens is connected to the totality.

So the totality of the universe, since the Big Bang has brought about this event. So that's what is, there's nothing you can do. Then you can do something and take action, yes.

But prior to taking action, there's an acceptance of the is-ness. Then there is an insight into what is possible. And then action, if it is possible, happens.

Or there is a realization that nothing is possible. Then surrender happens. And in that surrender, you are internally free of the situation.

So in that surrender or acceptance, you can sense the satisfaction arising, not because something is going well, because it may not be right now, but because you are connected with the source of all satisfaction, all life. And it feels it's fine. You may be trapped somewhere and it's fine.

So people, every human acts, speaks, in the way that corresponds to their state of consciousness at that moment. Sometimes you encounter humans. It's very common for humans to fluctuate between being relatively more conscious and quite unconscious.

So you might meet the same person that you know well, a family member, in two or three or more different modalities of consciousness, as you might know. And when you're having breakfast in the morning and the family member or your roommate is coming down the stairs, you never know who is coming down the stairs that morning. It could be a very cheerful and lovely person.

Isn't it great to be alive? And the next morning, it comes to a completely different entity down the stairs and starts complaining. And why didn't you do this?

You should have told me long ago. I've been thinking about that all night. It's just awful.

You always do that, don't you? Who is that? Well, that was the person that was light and cheerful yesterday morning.

And who knows who is coming down the next day? So with people who are fairly unconscious, they are subject to enormous fluctuations. And you also, to the extent that you could call them virtually certain different personalities emerging at different times.

So you're not dealing with one human being, people that I'm talking about, people who have not yet enough presence to bring about a more continuous state of identity. So you have all these people and then you might talk to one person and he says, okay, I'm now very clear in my mind what I want and I promise you those things that I did yesterday,

two days ago, this will never happen again. I'm really become very clear now.

It's all sorted out in my mind. And this person is genuinely believing that he's at a relatively, relatively slightly higher state of consciousness. And a few days or weeks pass and then he or she does exactly the same thing as before or worse.

And then you say, he's dishonest. He lied to me, he said he wouldn't do that again. He betrayed my trust.

I trusted him. We had a long talk. I started to trust him again.

And then what did he do? Turned around and did the same thing and worse. Not realizing these are, because the person is relatively unconscious, different sub-personality take that person over, which are just mental patterns, mental emotional patterns that could be called sub-personalities.

They take over that person and then there's somebody else there virtually. And so it's not, if you draw certain conclusions that this person now can never be trusted again. No, that wasn't the same person.

It's several different people there. If you draw some conclusion and even make some universal conclusion, then you yourself become deluded. If you say, you see, now I know people can't be trusted.

They do lie all the time, don't they? So suddenly the one sub-personality becomes everybody. And well, it does apply to the majority of people still.

You need to remember the majority of people are often completely possessed by mental, emotional forms of conditioning. And sometimes certain forms of conditioning arise very strongly and take over that person. And then that subsides.

There's a little bit of, so perhaps occasionally a little bit of awareness there before the next wave of conditioning comes and takes that person over. Once you see that, it's easier also to be with people because whatever behavior a person manifests towards you is the same as whatever the present moment presents. It cannot be otherwise.

At this present moment, nobody can act beyond their state of consciousness at this moment, but you should be more conscious, more conscious? What are you talking about? You talk about consciousness?

Let me tell you what you did. Start arguing with an ego. You can never win.

So dealing with your mind, life is difficult, yes. People are difficult, yes. Situations are often difficult, yes.

But they are much less difficult if your mind does not amplify the problems that you

encounter and the people that you encounter in your life. That already takes away a huge burden so that your mind no longer complains and has those patterns that deny what is and that weaves huge stories around people and events and about the past and about the future, the worry, the regret, the anxiety. These are all mental events that do not, these do not have to be part of the difficulty of life.

These can be transcended here and now. What then remains is the actual, and once you have tackled the problem-making dysfunction of your mind, and this is, of course, what we are all here, one of the reasons why we are here, and that is part of the spiritual awakening. Once you go beyond the problem-making dysfunction of the mind, it becomes so much easier to deal with the difficult things in life.

They are far less complex than the mind made them out to be. And there's always just looking, giving attention. Then you become intelligent.

You only become really intelligent when you can suspend for a moment the thinking function. So you rise above thought, and then you become alert, and then you look, and then you'll know what to do. And if the doing succeeds, it's fine.

If it doesn't, you look again. It's the art of living. So without the dysfunctional mind, things get easier.

The dysfunctional mind isn't there anymore when you accept the is-ness of the present moment. So the challenges come, they are external and internal. Your own mind is a big challenge, but you're already in the process of transcending that.

The other challenges remain, and that is good. Do not wait, however, for difficult situations to push you into presence. It's good if that happens, but choose presence even when you're not being challenged because that is vital.

Otherwise, life will, the universal intelligence that underlies all phenomena will see that, oh, this guy needs more problems because otherwise he goes to sleep all the time. Let's give him a few more. All life sees, oh, you're so, you're using, whenever you're waiting, you become present.

When you're in nature, you're present. You invite presence into your life. In the middle of the night, when worry starts, you suddenly realize this is not only futile, it's also destructive, and you surrender that kind of thinking and put your attention on your breathing instead or into your body.

Those are things where you voluntarily invite presence into your life. And then presence power, so to speak, presence power grows in you. Then as when a bigger situation happens, there's so much more presence to deal with it.

I've spent years of my life just dwelling in presence. You don't have to do that. I mean,

you can be active at the same time.

There were years of my life where there was very little doing and I was just sometimes spending hours on my bicycle or walking in a park, just being. And sometimes I had this strange feeling that there's a reason why I have to do that. It's not doing it, just call it.

So it's like going very deep in order to go out and make a difference in this world. I had to go very deep within first, very deep, and then the going out became possible. How much difference you make in this world is always relative to how deep you go within yourself, how much presence you access within yourself, how connected you are with the essence of who you are, the essence of life.

That determines how much difference you really make in this life. And so you're all going to make and are already making an enormous difference. And the universe loves you.

Consciousness, the universe is consciousness, and consciousness wants to emerge more fully on this planet and on many other planets, I'm sure, because that is what underlies the evolution of the whole universe. So by having the awakening of consciousness and your presence practice as your main life goal, no matter what you do on the surface of your life, your job, your relationships, your main goal is in your relationships, in your work situation, in your home situation, your main goal is being present wherever you are and whatever you do. Then your life becomes empowered and you will do a lot of good without necessarily feeling that I am doing it.

It flows through you. And those of you who are still looking for something to do, the question often people ask me, what am I meant to do? Where am I meant to be?

Who am I meant to be with? And of course, the first answer is the foundation for it all to find out where you're meant to be, what you're meant to do, who you're meant to be with, the first answer is you're meant to be here, you're meant to be doing what you're doing right now, and you're meant to be with whoever you are with right now at this moment. That's foundation.

I'm not talking about for the rest of your life, but right now, so you come to a full acceptance of whatever is in the present moment. Now, most people who are trying to figure out what they're supposed to do in their lives, they don't give their fullest attention and they're not fully aligned with the present moment, where they are, who they are with, they are rejecting it in some way. And that obstructs the power and obstructs the arising of presence.

So you become accepting and comfortable with where you are right now. So you're meant to be here right now. That's why I'm meant to be here.

So that can become a foundation for realizing what you should do once you accept the isness of present moment, what the doing then arises out of that state of alignment with

life, with this alignment with the present moment. Then you might get insights into what it is you want to do, or rather what the universe or the one consciousness wants to use you for. So you no longer look at what do I want from life, but what does life want from me?

How can I be of service to the one consciousness, you could say. And if then it begins to flow through you, and it could be, it might start flowing through you in exactly the same doing that you already been doing, but now you're doing it fully presently. Let's say you're an aspiring actress, but in the meantime, you're working at a fast food restaurant.

So can you be fully accepting of where you are right now without losing your goal, but giving your fullest loving attention to whatever you're doing right now? Even if it seems repetitive, you give it your loving attention. And it is often the case when you are completely aligned and completely accept what is, things begin to change.

When you are in non-acceptance internally, you're stuck. Can also happen that once you accept the present moment completely, you realize this is not, I cannot be here any longer, and you just walk out. That can happen too.

But it would not be a confrontational thing. It's a very peaceful realization, what it is that you need to do. So honor whatever it is you're doing at this moment.

And I sometimes admire in some restaurants, you have waiters or waitresses who are wonderfully present. It doesn't necessarily mean the most expensive restaurant. In fact, the most expensive often, they are just snobbish and they don't, but in some, even in simple restaurants, some are just, when they put a glass down, they're present.

It's done with care and attention. And when they ask what you want, they're present. So anywhere you can practice presence and you can affect people no matter where you are, because you will come into contact with some people.

And presence is contagious, as Tammy just told us. In a good way, presence is contagious. Whoever you come into contact with will be affected by your presence.

And then you will attract almost miraculously the right people or the right situations into your life that then will bring about a change. So by being present, you are connected to the totality and you attract people and situations into your life that are helpful. And then once you realize, oh, this is what I want to do, the doing, the insight comes, or it could be just a continuation of what you're doing already, but now you're doing it in an empowered way.

Might be totally different too. Once you realize and you take more action, empowered by presence, then you find many helpful factors suddenly appearing. The moment you're aligned with the arising consciousness and your main goal is presence, sustaining presence, no matter where you are and what you're doing, then your actions become

empowered by that one consciousness.

New ideas come, events, helpful things happen. It does not mean that obstacles do not happen. In fact, obstacles often do happen, but an obstacle, and this is vital, and you need to be very alert within yourself.

When an obstacle arises in the form of something not working out, in the form of a person who wants to block you, sabotage you, whatever it is, an obstacle, or difficult bureaucrats, government departments who don't want you to do whatever you want, many forms of obstacles, and an obstacle arises and you become negative and angry, irritated, upset. That means you've lost the power. You've lost presence.

It's no longer flowing through you. The ego has come in. So how you deal with obstacles in your chosen course of action determines whether there's a continuing power flowing through you or whether the ego has taken its place.

So an obstacle is never fought against. You either walk around it, so to speak, or you transform it by bringing a positive energy to it. So you don't make people who seem to be blocking you into enemies.

So you don't, you transform the seeming obstacle. Often it can be transformed into actually a helpful presence, because your state of consciousness determines the further development of that situation. The situation arises, what happens after the situation has arisen is determined by the state of consciousness in which you receive or respond to that situation.

So a difficult person, if you react egoically against a difficult person, then that person will become even more difficult. And in the process, you, your consciousness goes down, down. You become, and you may well end up at the same level of consciousness as that difficult person.

That happens by the moment you both shout at each other. And this has happened to spiritual people. They lost it.

It's okay. You have to lose it, and then you regain it, and then you lose it again, and then you regain it. So if you find yourself in a shouting argument with somebody, obviously you lost it.

And if you beat yourself up for being in a shouting argument with somebody, you lost it again. And then you say, okay, I lost it again. Am I going to beat myself up again for losing it the second time when I beat myself up?

No. So you become accepting also of your own shortcomings and start again. But it's so vital, any situation that comes, your attitude, your consciousness towards the situation determines how it develops further.

Whether it's a human being or a more complex situation at work or relation, in relationship, so there's an active part in you that determines what happens. In that sense, we could say that the universe, reality, so-called, tends to reflect back to you your state of consciousness. And some people create enormous drama out of very little, a tiny little thing, and their reaction, the egoic reaction, is so huge that the tiny little thing gets blown up out of all proportion.

And then they even convince others that this is a huge drama. One of my shortcomings is that I cannot respond to all the mail I get or read all the manuscripts and books people send. And I would need a staff of several full-time people just to respond to letters.

And if they're responding to letters, they will get more letters back and it would proliferate. I read some, and it's wonderful to read. Often it's a beautiful message, what we have been helped.

Some people, however, their ego may be quite strong. They expect an answer. They don't realize how many people write in.

When my power of now was published, somebody said to me, you should send it to a famous person, and that famous person could write an endorsement, and then the book will reach many more people. So I sent it to Deepak Chopra and Wayne Dyer.